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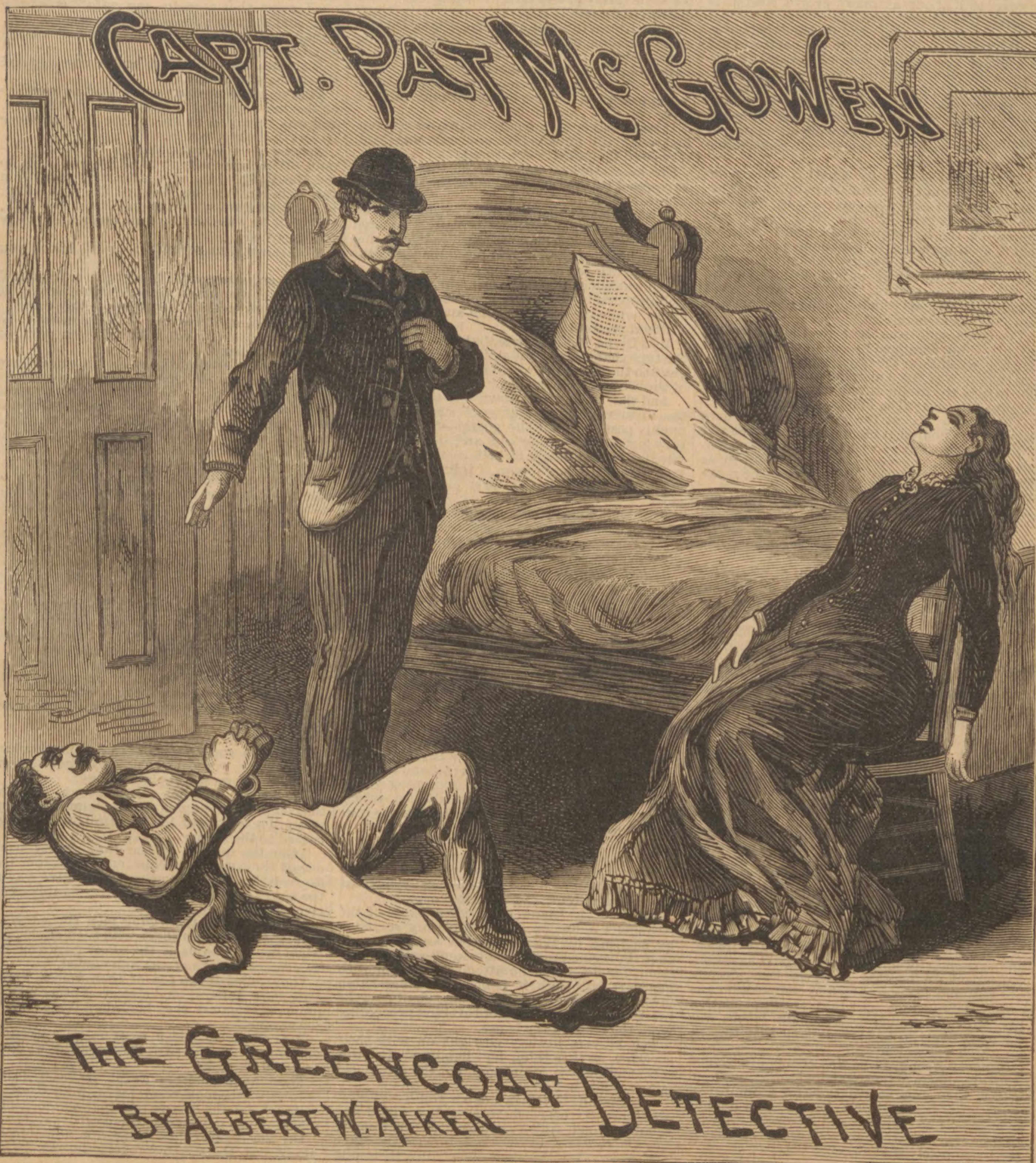
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THEN CAPTAIN PAT AROSE TO HIS FEET. "WELL, YOUNG LADY, I WAS JUST IN TIME!" HE REMARKED.

Captain Pat McGowen, THE GREENCOAT DETECTIVE.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN,
AUTHOR OF "THE WOLVES OF NEW YORK,"
"JOE PHENIX, POLICE SPY," "THE DE-
MON DETECTIVE," "OVERLAND
KIT," "THE WOLF DE-
MON," ETC.

CHAPTER I. THE RECOGNITION.

THE Bijou Opera House on Broadway, New York, is one of the favorite play-houses of the metropolis.

It is the recognized home of burlesque, and, consequently, a popular resort with all strangers fond of whiling away an idle hour by gazing upon the scenes of mimic life as depicted upon the boards sacred to the wearers of the sack and buskin.

On the night of which we write the theater was crowded. It was the first appearance of an English burlesque troupe which had been heralded far and wide as possessing rare merit.

Rumor with her hundred tongues reported that in the troupe were some of the most beautiful women who had ever graced the New York stage; therefore public curiosity had been keenly excited, and, as a natural result, the theater had about as many people within its walls as it could well contain.

The bright particular star of the troupe was a Miss Diana Duclois, who, if her portraits did not flatter her greatly, was as beautiful a woman as the New York stage had ever displayed.

She was not quite so young as she might be, for rumor said she was fully thirty, having been a popular favorite in London for fully ten years, and from that city glowing accounts had come of her wonderful talent and remarkable powers of fascination.

It was her first visit to America, and as she came accompanied by a full corps of English artists, each and every one selected by Miss Duclois in person, the girls for their beauty and talent—on the burlesque stage, beauty without talent often manages to get along pretty well, but talent without beauty seldom pleases—and the men for their actual acting powers, it was the expectation that the party would achieve the success which, in stage parlance, is called a "tremendous hit."

The burlesque was new to the American boards, being arranged by one of the deft London playwrights for the express purpose of catching the fancy of the American public, and in order to give the production a sort of local coloring the title was "The Female Bluebeard."

This was a dig at the great country where Mormonism flourishes like a green bay tree and the divorce laws are so peculiar that it is possible for a man to marry a dozen wives in as many years and yet get rid of them without the aid of grim death with his sickle.

It was preceded by a farce, after the English fashion, so as to afford the late comers an opportunity to get comfortably seated before the main attraction of the entertainment began.

The performers who appeared in the farce made an excellent impression, the men being excessively funny and the women pretty and captivating.

So when the curtain descended upon this preliminary piece the audience manifested their approval with a generous amount of applause, which was a sweet incense not only to the actors upon the stage but also to a pair of gentlemen who were standing by the main entrance to the auditorium.

One of these was a tall, broad-shouldered gentleman with a decidedly Southern look, very carefully and neatly dressed, with a rose in his button-hole, and the other an undersized man, attired in an ill-fitting tweed suit and a billy-cock hat, after the style of a London shop-boy out for a holiday.

The first was Colonel Joe Richmond, the lessee of the Opera House, and the other Mr. Archibald Manwaring, as he was pleased to call himself, the enterprising Jew theatrical speculator who was responsible for the importation of the burlesque troupe, and therefore its manager.

A look at the manager's face with its yellow and wrinkled skin, bead-like eyes, high cheekbones, over which the skin was tightly drawn, and extremely prominent nose, would have convinced even a careless observer that, despite the aristocratic name which he claimed, he was of the Hebrew race, and that some appellation like Moses Solomons or Abraham Jacobs was far more likely to be his real name than the one by which he was known.

Slippery Archy, as he was commonly termed by the members of the theatrical world, had been mixed up in stage speculations for a number of years, and was reported to have made a deal of money, both in America and Europe, but for all that he was an extremely poor debtor and never paid any money that he could possibly avoid.

He was known as a shifty, uncertain man, prompt to take any advantage, but an oily, spe-

cious talker, and it was reported in theatrical circles that he was not only Miss Diana Duclois's business manager, but her husband as well, at which all who knew anything about the matter marveled greatly, for it seemed as if a bright, brilliant woman like the burlesque actress might have selected a much better husband.

Both of the parties, though, denied the report, and, to all outward seeming there was, apparently, no closer relation between them than manager and star.

Both the lessee of the Opera House and the Jew speculator were delighted at the cordial manner in which the audience received the newcomers.

"First blood!" exclaimed the Virginian, for Richmond was a native of the old State which at one time proudly claimed, and with truth, to be the "mother of presidents."

And his title of colonel was no fiction, for he had won his grade in the Valley campaigns, riding by "Stonewall" Jackson's side.

"So help me goodness! the burlesque will split them up the back!" responded Slippery Archy, who delighted in all kinds of slang expressions.

A ten minutes' intermission and then the burlesque began.

It was a well-arranged thing of its kind; a mess of trash in reality, but full of good music, "catchy" songs and laughter-provoking comicalities, and afforded plenty of opportunities for some thirty pretty girls to display both their charms and their talents.

And, after a few minutes, Miss Diana Duclois came bounding upon the stage as the dashing young soldier, whose fate it was to both captivate and punish the Female Bluebeard.

The rôle called for a song immediately upon her appearance, and she dashed at once into the glee.

It was what is technically known as a "topical song," full of local hits, and, as it was good, it pleased the audience immensely.

The lady's success was so great that she had to respond to three encores before the spectators were satisfied.

It was little wonder that she produced a favorable impression, for she was really a talented actress and an excellent vocalist, besides being as beautiful a woman as had faced the footlights in New York for many a long day.

She was about the medium height, plump and well-proportioned, possessing an almost perfect figure while she had the round and rosy face of a fifteen year old girl.

Miss Diana was a blonde, but with dark eyes, the type that the ancient artist selected when he gave to the admiring world his glorious picture of the Virgin Mother.

And the "men about town" in the audience, the inveterate "first-nighters," who were thoroughly posted in all the gossip of the day, as they gazed upon the bright and beautiful actress, found it difficult to believe the story was true that she was a woman of thirty, for she did not appear to be a day over eighteen at the most.

The song being ended at last, when the applause died away the dialogue began.

Miss Diana, as the young captain, had to address his brother soldiers.

"'Tis my birthday, lads, and here in this town of Dover,
'Hear me swear, henceforth, a new leaf I'll turn over.'"

And here the actress came to a dead pause and raised her jeweled hand to heaven to give due effect to the words.

But before she could proceed with the rest of the speech there was a sudden commotion in the front of the house.

A tall, brawny, broad-shouldered man, with long yellow-gray hair, curling down about his ears, and a yellow-gray beard which reached half-way to his waist, dressed well, but rather carelessly, rose abruptly to his feet and in great agitation, stretching out his hands toward the stage, cried in a deep, sonorous voice, which rung through the crowded theater like the peal of a trumpet:

"Great heavens! that is my wife!"

For a moment the audience gazed in astonishment, while the people upon the stage forgot what they had to do and looked in wonder at the stalwart figure of the excited man.

As for Miss Diana, the evident cause of the stranger's agitation, she was plainly so taken by surprise by the unexpected announcement that she seemed to be struck dumb with amazement, for she made no attempt to go on with her part, although it is one of the unwritten laws of the stage that no notice shall ever be taken of an interruption of this kind proceeding from the front of the house.

The players always go right on with their speeches as if nothing had happened; but this interruption was so unusual that the astounded actors would not go on.

"Catherine, Catherine, don't you know me?" continued the bearded stranger, in his loud and sonorous voice, full of command, and advancing into the center aisle, he strode toward the stage with the evident intention of invading it, despite the musicians in the orchestra.

The movement seemed to rouse the actress from her stupor and to fill her soul with fear, for, with a loud scream she ran from the stage and disappeared behind the scenes.

CHAPTER II.

A LIVELY SKIRMISH.

THE headlong flight of the actress, and her extreme alarm, at once startled the audience from their amazement, and the theater immediately was in an uproar.

"Sit down!"

"Put him out!"

"Order, order!"

"Where are the police?"

And fifty other discordant cries rung through the building.

Two-thirds of the men in the parquette, through whose center aisle the stranger was advancing, were on their feet, and a hundred hands were outstretched to seize the author of the disturbance.

A couple of the ushers, dapper, gentlemanly little fellows, came down the passage when they saw that the stranger was bent upon a disturbance, and when the gentlemen in the front seats hurried into the aisle, so that the man's progress was impeded, they managed to overtake him, and with scant ceremony seized him by the arms.

"Come, come, this won't do!" said one; "you must sit down and not make a disturbance."

"If you don't sit down, you will be put out!" added the other.

"I want that woman—my wife!" cried the man, and then, seemingly with the greatest ease, he threw aside the ushers, and resumed his onward course.

A prominent Wall street broker now opposed the stranger's passage.

This young gentleman was a leading member of the most popular athletic club in the city, and was regarded as one of the best amateur boxers in the metropolis.

Among his associates, though, he had the repute of being a rather "fresh" young man, to use the slang of the day, and fully proved on this occasion that he deserved the reputation, for, planting himself in the middle of the aisle, just as if he was burning for a chance to "show off," he cried:

"Sit down, you scoundrel, or I'll knock you down."

"No, no, stranger; I ain't got ary quarrel with you," the other replied, protestingly; "I only want to speak to that woman—my wife."

And then, as if reckless of consequences, he pushed the broker aside with the open palm of his resistless hand.

The broker felt that the eyes of the multitude were on him; so, striking the pose of a sport he proceeded to "do" the other up in the most scientific manner. He dealt the stranger a heavy blow on the chin, but, before a second stroke, roused to fury by the insult, the Southerner shot out his massive fist, and the broker, though prepared for attack, could no more withstand that terrible blow than if he had been the merest novice, and the massive fist took him full on the point of the jaw, and he went over backward as though struck by a mad bull.

The occupants of the upper tier, with that propensity for fair play which is distinctively American, perceiving that the parquette was disposed to ill-treat the stranger, immediately championed his cause.

"Knocked out, be jabers, in the furst round!" yelled a red-headed Irishman in the front row of the upper aisle, speaking with a comical brogue that set the tier in a roar of laughter.

"Fetch on another dude!" piped a newsboy.

"Brace up, you bloods, and have some style about yer!" suggested another youth.

And then a brawny, beef-fed Englishman roared:

"Time!"

But there was no time in that young broker; he had been "knocked out" by that terrible stroke in the most complete manner.

The broker was not alone though, but had the company of a dozen of his chums and they, when they witnessed his downfall, immediately rushed to the rescue.

After the fashion of the time, nearly every one of them sported a cane, and as custom had decreed that the light switch must give way to the heavy stick, the canes were tolerably effective weapons.

With loud cries the young men rushed to attack the brawny stranger with their sticks, and when the occupants of the upper tiers saw this movement their rage was unbounded.

They yelled at the top of their voices, "cowards, curs, duffers!" and a score of other uncomplimentary names they hurled at the bloods in the parquette.

In truth, it seemed a most unequal struggle, one man with his bare fists against a dozen armed with sticks.

The man was either drunk or crazy in the opinion of the lookers-on, for he did not seem to comprehend the danger which threatened him, and made no movement to retreat from it.

On the contrary, he evinced a desire to advance, but the young broker's friends barred the way.

A moment the mob of young men hesitated, just as if they were conscious that it was a rather cowardly thing for a dozen of them, with stout sticks in their hands, to attack an unarmed man, and one, too, old enough to be the father of any man in the throng.

But the halt soon came to an end, and with loud and angry cries they rushed to the attack, the occupants of the gallery howling like demons and vainly endeavoring to tear up the seats, upon which they had been sitting, so as to use them as missiles to hurl at the young bloods in the parquette.

The massive stranger would, in all probability, have been badly injured by the infuriated young men, despite his wonderful physical powers, had not assistance come to his aid in the most unexpected manner.

A tall, muscular, good-looking gentleman, with a smoothly-shaven face, whereon resolution and courage were indelibly impressed, dressed in a neat business-suit of dark-green cloth and with a good-sized blackthorn cane in his hand, had made his way through the throng until he reached the side of the stranger just as the young men sprung to the attack.

The people in the vicinity had hastened to get out of the neighborhood of the coming fight, so that there was no one in the immediate vicinity of the threatened man when the young fellows advanced excepting this new-comer of whom we have spoken.

And as the broker's friends rushed upon their victim, this gentleman sprung before him.

Wielding his blackthorn "twig" in a way that told he had received his education in that line in a land where "wigs were often seen upon the green," he showed the lookers-on some as pretty "single-stick" play as was ever seen.

His stick moved so rapidly through the air that the eye was unable to follow it, but the heads of the foremost of the attackers soon ached under the blows.

He was such an adept at this sort of thing that he was able to catch every blow aimed at him—for when he jumped in front of the stranger the young men naturally turned their attention to him, determined to punish him severely for his intrusion.

It did not take them long, though, to discover that they had taken the biggest kind of a contract upon their hands.

Inside of six seconds the six men in the advance had got all the fight they wanted, and all of them fell back in great disorder, the stranger in the dark-green suit now advancing upon them.

A few seconds more the retreat became a rout and the fight was at an end.

And then the brawny Irishman in the gallery recognized the new-comer, and as soon as the yell of exultation which had greeted his victory over the young bloods subsided he cried as loud as he could shout:

"It's Pat McGowen—the man wid the green coat—the Dublin Bay detective!"

And this announcement was followed by a yell which seemed almost great enough to raise the roof.

The name of Pat McGowen was not strange to the ears of the audience.

Few were there in the assemblage who had not heard of "the man in the green coat," as he was popularly called, or the Greencoat Detective, as some of his admirers were wont to term him.

McGowen was one of the noted men of the metropolis.

He was about forty years old and had emigrated from Erin's isle when a boy of eighteen, enlisted in the Union army immediately after landing, and by the time he was twenty had won the "bars" of a captain by his daring deeds.

Then, when the war ended, he returned to New York and became enrolled among the detectives of the metropolis.

In this new career he was as successful as when he wore the Union blue, but, tiring at last of serving the city, where his efforts were often interfered with by meddling politicians, who soon discovered that Captain Pat was a man whom they could neither use nor abuse, he resigned from public life and opened a private detective bureau of his own which had flourished wonderfully.

As we have said, McGowen was a popular man, and it wasn't any wonder that the majority of the audience roared with delight when he was recognized and his name yelled aloud.

"McGowen, Captain Pat McGowen!" cried the Southerner, as the name fell upon his ears and McGowen turned to him after forcing the bloods to retreat.

"Why, dog my cats! if you ain't the man I surrendered to at Five Forks when you cut my Tigers to pieces."

"The same; and now, Colonel John Andy Jackson, I must ask you to yield yourself my prisoner again," the detective replied.

CHAPTER III.

THE COLONEL'S STORY.

At this moment, just as Captain Pat McGowen made his request the curtain came rolling down.

By this time the disturbance in front of the house had seemed so serious to the stage-manager behind the scenes, that he deemed it wise to drop the curtain until matters quieted a little.

He was an Englishman, new to this country, and his idea of America and the customs of its people were extremely crude, and derived chiefly from the astounding yarns which often find a place in the columns of the English journals.

It was his firm belief that almost all of the Americans went armed to the teeth, and that it was a common occurrence for a dozen or two of the leading citizens of New York to have a free fight with knives and pistols in the principal streets of the metropolis, and that the prominent man who had not killed two or three of his fellow-citizens in these impromptu battles was a somewhat rare bird.

So, when this disturbance took place in the front of the house, it was not wonderful that the Englishman should immediately jump to the belief that one-half of the audience were going to massacre the other half in cold blood.

The fall of the curtain, shutting out the mimic scene from the gaze of the Southerner, seemed to rouse him from the spell which had fallen on him.

He heaved a deep sigh and a troubled expression appeared on his face.

"Yes, yes, I'm your man," he said. "I will go with you."

"I am really sorry I kicked up a disturbance, but I didn't mean to do anything of the kind. But when I recognized that woman it upset me so that I didn't know what I was doing."

"Great heavens!" he cried, abruptly, "I haven't seen her for twenty odd years, and I thought she was dead long ago."

"But thar she is, right in the flesh, and as pretty as a picture too, just as she was years and years ago when I met and married her."

"Do you wonder, McGowen, that I forgot whar I was? Do you understand that the only idee I had in my head was to climb onto that platform for to ask her what she had done with my child?"

"Yes, colonel, I comprehend, of course," McGowen replied in his soothing way.

"But you know this isn't any place to discuss a private family matter; you are disturbing all the audience—the ladies and gentlemen, you know, who are interested in the play."

"Good heavens! so I am!" the colonel exclaimed.

"Wa-al, now, you kin shoot me, captain, if I thought a blamed thing about it."

"The sight of that woman coming upon me so unexpected-like kinder made me a bit crazy, I reckon," the veteran soldier explained in a simple, honest way.

"Well, you are all right now, but let us get out so they can go on with the play."

"Come with me to the manager's office and I will see that you have a chance to speak to the lady."

"Sart'in! I'll trust you, Captain McGowen, I'd trust you with my life, for I know from what I have seen of you in the old time that you are a man whom it is safe to tie to."

"Come along then."

And the detective officer led the way to the private office of Colonel Joe Richmond.

Both the colonel and the Jew speculator had been in a fever of anxiety during the disturbance, for they were afraid it would culminate in a riot which might interfere materially with the prospects of the theater.

Great was their relief when they saw McGowen approaching with the stranger.

"That's Captain Pat McGowen," the manager hastened to explain to the speculator, "the smartest detective that there is in New York."

"It is all right now; there will not be any more trouble."

Slippery Archy gave vent to a sigh of relief.

"Well, I should smile!" he ejaculated. "Dash my buttons! if I wasn't afraid they would pull the daisy old show-shop down before they got through."

"It is all right! you can 'bank' on that!" the manager asserted, and then he hastened to throw open the door of his private office, so that the detective and the stranger might enter, as he had an idea that McGowen purposed bringing the long-bearded man in so that some explanation might be made.

Both he and Slippery Archy had heard the stranger's exclamation, and although, of course, the manager was not sufficiently acquainted with the history of Miss Diana Duclois to be able to know positively that the man was laboring under a mistake when he claimed her as his wife, yet he felt tolerably certain that the man was mistaken.

But the Jew speculator declared immediately that the statement was all rubbish.

"Bosh! stuff and nonsense!" he cried. "What's the matter with the old guy? He ought to be killed with a stuffed club. He's as mad as a March hare!"

But for all this positive assertion, he was anxious to hear what the man had to say for himself, and so he followed the manager into the private office.

Some of the crowd who came tagging at the

heels of the stranger and the detective manifested an idea of entering the office, but McGowen waved them back.

"Better resume your seats again, gentlemen," he said. "This circus is over for to-night, but the regular performance will be soon under way again, and you had better be on hand."

And then he shut the door in the face of the crowd, and fastened it with a bolt which was on the inside.

"I reckon they have had more show now than is set down in the programme," he observed to the manager; "and they must not expect to see any more than what they have paid for."

"Colonel, let me introduce to you an old friend of mine. Colonel Joe Richmond, allow me to make you acquainted with Colonel John Andy Jackson, formerly of the Louisiana Tigers."

"Colonel Joe Richmond who was on Stonewall Jackson's staff when Banks was cleaned out in the Valley!" the stranger exclaimed, in surprise.

"The same," and the manager grasped the other warmly by the hand.

"And you, if I mistake not, was with Lee just about the same time."

"Yes, you bet I was!"

And then the two veterans indulged in another hearty hand-shake.

"Dog my cats! if this yere don't make me feel like old times!" exclaimed the man from Louisiana.

"I have often heard of you, colonel, though I never happened to run across you personally."

"And Captain McGowen is an old friend of mine, too. The captain took me prisoner just before the fight at Five Forks, and durned glad I was to surrender, too, for I was just played out; hadn't had anything to eat for about twenty hours, and not a drink of good whisky for a week; but in Pat McGowen's camp I satisfied both hunger and thirst."

And then the Southerner had to shake hands with the detective.

"As the Governor of North Carolina said to the Governor of South Carolina—"observed the manager.

"It is a long time between drinks," interrupted Colonel John Andy Jackson.

"You see I haven't forgotten my early education, and I s'pose you are kinder hinting that you have some good liquor somewhar 'round your plantation hyer."

The manager made haste to produce the liquor, and they all took a social drink together.

"Now, I s'pose you are anxious to know what caused me to make such a donkey of myself before all the people," the old officer of the once famous Louisiana Tigers remarked, as they all sat down.

"If you will be so kind as to oblige the company," Colonel Richmond remarked.

"Wa-al, a short hoss is soon curried, and a short story is soon told."

"Just a while before the last year of the war I was wounded and went home on the sick list. In New Orleans, in my hotel, I made acquaintance of a young Englishman, and through him was introduced to his sister, a pretty a girl as I ever laid eyes on, a brown-haired, rosy-cheeked English beauty."

"I fell in love, over head and ears, at first sight, and I went for the gal, tooth and nail!"

"I knew that I hadn't much time to spare, for as soon as I got well enough I would be obliged to return to my regiment, for not a man could be spared in those dark days."

"Being rich, while the girl was poor—her brother was a night clerk in the hotel—I was fool enough for to try to dazzle the girl with my wealth, and so win her."

"The game worked, and the girl became my wife; Catherine Raymond was her name."

"Just a month I enjoyed my treasure, and then back I went to the war, and I didn't see my wife until the thing busted."

"After the surrender I made my way back to Orleans as poor as a church mouse, for my agent, whom I had trusted as if he had been my brother, had gobbled all my property and absconded."

"This was the news that met me in Orleans the moment I reached the town. Then I sought my wife. She was kinder struck dumb for a moment at my appearance, for the news had come to Orleans that I had been killed in one of the battles around Richmond, and she didn't seem to be a bit glad to see me; why, the first thing she said was to ask why she hadn't had any money for the last three months."

"My agent levanting of course put a stop to the supplies."

"I explained the matter and, durn me, gentlemen, if she didn't turn on me like a wild-cat when she found I was clean broke."

"She said she had only married me for my money, and that now the cash was gone she hadn't any use for me. And more, she wasn't my legal wife anyway, for her brother was really her husband and my acquaintance had been made with the idea of playing me for a fool."

"Of course I was just idiot enough not to believe it, but thought it was her woman's way of trying to exasperate me, and it did r'ile me a bit, too, so much so that I allowed I would box

her ears like a naughty child, and durn me, gentlemen, if she didn't pull a pistol on me and let me have the contents, too.

"I went down, kerslap! She thought she had settled my hash and she dusted.

"In a week though I was all right ag'in, and I looked into the matter. Her story was true; the brother was her husband, and after my supposed murder they fled together and with them they carried an infant—a baby—my child as I firmly believed, and I swore I would never rest until I found the woman and the child.

"I had a darned hard tussle with luck for some time, but at last I succeeded, and I am a rich man again, and the moment I got my affairs in shape I started for to keep my oath, and hyer in the first big city I strike I run afoul of the woman, for this Diana Duclois is my wife, Catherine Raymond."

That the old soldier firmly believed this was evident, but the rest were incredulous.

"I am the lady's manager," Slippery Archy said, "and I feel sure you have been deceived by an odd resemblance, but you shall have an interview with the lady to-morrow and satisfy yourself."

"Honest Injun?" said the veteran, doubtfully.

"Oh, I assure you!" Colonel Richmond hastened to exclaim.

"All right; by the way, what was it that the Governor of North Carolina said—"

"What will you take, gentlemen?" the manager cried.

CHAPTER IV. THE AMATEUR.

AND now that the reader may become interested in another character who is fated to play a prominent part in our tale we must turn back the wheels of Old Father Time's chariot a little.

It is of the morning of the day on the evening of which occurred the stirring events related in our last chapters that we are about to write.

The hands of the clock had just reached the hour of ten and Miss Diana Duclois sat by the stage door of the Bijou Opera House in an extremely bad temper.

By her side stood Slippery Archy, who had just arrived, and from the frown upon the brow of the burlesque queen he saw that trouble was brewing.

Having described Miss Diana as she appeared on the stage it is only necessary to say that she looked almost as well by daylight when dressed for the street as when arrayed and "made-up" for the stage.

Envious women—Miss Diana's professional sisters of course—said, with bitter accent, that she was always "made-up," and that if she was to wash the red paint from her cheeks and lips, the "lily white" from the rest of her face and neck, the golden dye from her eyebrows and the black from her eye-lashes, remove the wig and allow her own natural cropped head to be seen, she would look to be at least forty years old, if a day.

On the stage she looked like a child of sixteen; in the street no one would take her to be over twenty-two or three, and yet these scandal-mongers asserted that she would never see forty again.

These jealousies are the bane of professional life.

"What is the matter?" asked the fox-like manager.

"Matter enough!" cried the burlesque queen, imperiously. "Here's that cat of a Tillie Clarke sends me a doctor's certificate that she is too ill to appear and play the fairy queen to-night. Just as if I didn't know that she isn't any more sick than I am."

"Put another girl in her place."

"That's easy enough for you to say, but there isn't one of them that will suit me anywhere near as well.

"She is the only one in the troupe with brown hair, and the rest are all so much in love with their blonde wigs that I believe there isn't one of them who wouldn't rather give up her situation than go on with brown hair."

"By George!" exclaimed the manager, abruptly, "I never thought of it before, but I wish I may die if I don't think it will be the proper caper!"

"Oh, stop your stupid slang and talk sense!" she exclaimed. "What on earth do you mean?"

"There's been a girl to see you here this morning—a regular brown-haired angel, I assure you, anxious to go on the stage, stunning figure, if I'm any judge, and a pair of eyes brilliant enough to bore a hole right through a man. I shouldn't be surprised if she was waiting outside now.

"Will you see her? She's just the ticket! Tillie isn't anywhere alongside of her."

As a rule the burlesque queen had a supreme contempt for amateurs and rarely bothered with them, but on this occasion the whim seized her to grant the applicant an audience.

Slippery Archy's supposition was correct: the young lady was waiting at the stage door, and the Jew speculator introduced her into the presence of Miss Diana Duclois.

The burlesque queen surveyed the girl with

the air of a judge, for she saw at the first glance that her business manager had not been extravagant in his estimation of the lady's charms.

In person the new-comer was about the medium height, possessed a beautiful figure and a charming face.

The features were regular and finely-cut, with a decidedly aristocratic air.

The face rather round than long, a regular rose-bud of a mouth, large, dark-brown eyes, and her hair, which was luxuriant in the extreme, was of an odd peculiar golden-brown somewhat approaching auburn.

Take her for all in all, the girl was as great a beauty as one would be apt to encounter in a day's walk in any city in the Union.

The finely-molded chin too, and certain lines about the mouth afforded ample evidence to the student, well-read in human nature, that the girl had a will of her own, and was no weak, wavering mortal, fickle and unstable.

She made her appearance before the English burlesque queen without the slightest embarrassment, and looked her full in the face with her clear, honest eyes.

The burlesque queen, as good a judge of human nature as could be easily found, was favorably impressed with the appearance of the girl, although there was something about her that she did not understand—something which puzzled her, and yet she could not explain what it was.

She did not allow this matter to bother her though, but dismissed it as a fancy unworthy of thought and plunged at once into business.

"You wish to see Miss Duclois?"

"Yes."

"I am Miss Duclois."

"I wanted to ascertain if there was any chance for me in your company."

"You are not an actress?"

The experienced woman of the stage had come quickly to this decision.

"No I am not, but I have taken part in private theatricals, so I am used to appearing before the public and really have had some training for an actress."

"Your friends told you, I suppose, that you had great genius in that line and that if you went on the stage you would really make your everlasting fortune?" said the old actress, with a perceptible sneer.

"Oh, no it was at school where I played, and I had no friends to encourage me, for I am an orphan and all alone in the world, but my encouragement came from the audience, who always seemed to be pleased with what I did."

"Can't you get a living in some other way than by going on the stage?" the burlesque queen asked, abruptly.

"Yes I suppose I could, for I understand music thoroughly, both vocal and instrumental, and, in fact, for the last few years have paid for my schooling by teaching the other pupils. I am also expert with my needle and can do all sorts of fancy work, but my tastes lead me to choose the life of an actress, for I believe whatever talents I may possess lie in that direction."

"Don't you know that I am not what might be called a regular actress?" exclaimed Miss Diana, abruptly.

"I am a blonde burlesquer—a 'dizzy' blonde, as some of these impudent newspaper rascals sometimes say, and that if you join my troupe instead of getting a chance to play Juliet or Pauline, or any of those 'darling' roles, you will have to exhibit yourself with very few clothes, declaim idiotic trash, sing stupid songs and kick up your heels in jigs and breakdowns?"

The actress was painting the life as coarsely as possible.

"Oh, yes, I understand all about it," the applicant answered, carelessly, "but as I am expert in both singing and dancing—having taught dancing as well as music—and able to execute all kinds of fancy dances—besides having a natural liking for lively parts always being more successful than in grave ones, I thought I would get along better in some such troupe as yours than in a regular company."

The actress had watched the girl closely while she spoke, and from the expression upon her face it was plainly to be seen that the applicant was making a favorable impression.

"Well," Miss Diana said, after pausing for a moment as if to think the matter over, "I will give you a trial. One of my troupe is on the sick list and you can take her place. You will do the fairy queen; 'tisn't much, only a few lines. The main thing is the dress and the looks; I will provide the dress, but you must commence to-night; we rehearse in half an hour."

"I am perfectly willing," the girl replied, in a placid way, just as if she was an old hand at the business and used to being called upon in an emergency.

"What is your name?"

"Philippa Edmonds."

"Not your own, of course?"

"It is as far as I know. I am an orphan, as I told you; both my parents died when I was an infant."

"They were strangers in the place where I

was born, died soon after my birth, and all I know is that Philippa Edmonds was the name they gave me."

"Quite a romance; and you don't know anything about your parents' relatives?"

"Nothing."

"Why, your story is about the same as my own, excepting that I never had any advantages!" Miss Diana declared, in a sudden burst of confidence.

"I was brought up in the gutter, and was born there, too, for aught I know."

"Well, I am going to give you a chance to show if there is any stuff in you, for I've taken a liking to you; and that's a bad sign, too, for I never took a fancy to any woman yet that she didn't turn and claw me the very first chance she got."

"I shall be grateful and will surely try my best to deserve your kindness."

"We will see in regard to that," the burlesque queen observed, with a doubtful shake of the head.

"Your salary will be small, only six dollars a week, but I will provide everything for you, so you will not have to buy anything. Where are you stopping?"

"I have not selected any place. All the baggage I have is a valise, and that is at the depot. I only arrived in the city this morning."

"Well, I will introduce you to one of my ladies who will take you to a place where she has a room. You can get a pretty fair room for a couple of dollars a week, so you will be able to live on your salary, and if you do well I will increase it."

The novice expressed her satisfaction at this arrangement, and then the burlesque queen conducted her to the stage and introduced her to the lady of whom she had spoken.

She was a tall, good-looking English girl, answering to the name of Blanche Cunningham, and she took a liking to the new-comer immediately, and this aided the novice greatly.

The rehearsal passed off very well, Miss Philippa did what little she had to do in an acceptable manner, and the burlesque queen felt satisfied that her judgment had not been at fault in giving the girl a chance.

After rehearsal Philippa accompanied Miss Cunningham to the lodging-house on Eighth street, which was largely patronized by theatrical people, and secured a room there, a small hall bedroom in the rear of the building on the third floor.

At night the novice scored a success, for she had a beautiful voice, which she had been training to use in public speaking, and her personal appearance in the scanty robes of the fairy queen was a revelation of beauty seldom seen upon the stage.

After the disturbance in the theater, which we related the particulars of in the first chapters of our tale, the performance proceeded to its end without interruption, and a decided success was attained. The troupe had made a hit.

It was about eleven o'clock when Miss Cunningham and Philippa left the theater, and proceeded home.

There was the usual gathering of loungers at the stage door of the theater waiting to get a glimpse of the actresses, but the girls, closely muffled in their cloaks and veils, passed through the group without either looking to the right or left, and, of course, as they did not take the trouble to look behind them, they were not conscious that after they had passed the group, a tall, well-built man, dressed in a dark suit of clothes, rather the worse for wear, quitted the rest and followed cautiously after them.

The two girls, in blissful ignorance that their footsteps were being dogged, proceeded directly to the lodging-house, while close behind them, as persistent as their shadows, came the stranger.

The girls chatted as they walked along.

"You made a success of it to-night," Miss Cunningham said.

"I tried to do my best."

"I heard Miss Duclois tell Manwaring that you were far better than Tillie Clarke, and, by the way, what do you get a week—you don't mind telling me?"

"Oh, no; six dollars."

"And she got twenty-five!" the other cried, indignantly. "Decidedly you will have to strike for more money soon."

"If that is the case, it seems to me as if I ought to have more."

When they arrived at the lodging-house, Miss Cunningham invited Philippa into her room, and pressed her to partake of a light lunch which she was accustomed to enjoy after the toils of the performance.

Philippa remained there some fifteen minutes, and then sought her own apartment.

She entered and sat down in a chair by the bedside to reflect upon the events of the day.

Her back was toward the door, which she had neglected to lock, and she had hardly taken her seat when a slight noise attracted her attention and caused her to turn her head in the direction of the door.

And then, to her horror, she discovered a tall, foreign-looking man, with a peculiar-looking

white face, in which gleamed a pair of coal-black eyes, advancing upon her, a glistening knife in his hand.

"One moment for prayer, and then this dagger will send your soul to the other world!" the intruder cried.

CHAPTER V. A FRIEND IN NEED.

THE girl was so overcome with fear that she was not able to articulate a sound; her tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of her mouth and utterance was denied her.

All she could do was to stare at the intruder. As we have said the man had a strange-looking face, and a decidedly foreign appearance.

He was a man of forty or thereabouts, but one of those men whose ages it is difficult to judge by his face, for when such a man is young he appears to be older than he is, and when age steals upon him few signs of it appear in his face.

He was thin in flesh, which made his features appear even sharper than they really were.

His face was oval-shaped, the nose prominent and rather inclined to a hook, high cheek-bones and deep-set eyes, which were jet-black in color and seemed to shine with an unnatural light.

The face was very pale, unnaturally so, and appeared to be even paler than it really was by the contrast of the long drooping mustache and pointed imperial which adorned his chin, both jet-black, as were also the huge eyebrows from under which his eyes glared.

Despite the peculiarity of the appearance of the stranger's face, there wasn't the least bit of irresolution about it, and the threatened girl, as she glanced in her terror at the unexpected intruder, saw no signs in his features that he would hesitate to fulfill the threat which he had made.

"Demon, with the face of an angel, look your last upon life!" the man exclaimed in low suppressed tones, but which were full of strong emotion.

And then the horror-stricken girl could plainly see that the man was nerving himself to strike the blow which would surely hurl her soul abruptly into another world, and yet so great was the spell of terror which sat upon her that she was unable to scream or attempt to resist her awful fate.

The intruder braced himself to strike the fatal blow, but before the knife could descend a newcomer appeared upon the scene.

Through the door which the stranger, for fear of alarming the girl, had neglected to close tightly behind him, came Pat McGowen, and as the man drew back his arm so that the blow might be a terrible one, the detective, the famous hero of the green coat, caught him by the wrist.

The assassin, although taken completely by surprise, turned immediately upon his assailant, and in a moment the two men were locked together in a desperate struggle.

They appeared to be pretty evenly matched; though the advantage of the surprise was with Captain Pat, yet for a minute or so the assassin put forth such almost superhuman endeavors that it looked as if he would succeed in freeing himself from the iron-like grip which the resolute detective had fastened upon him.

But when Pat McGowen found that he had a tough customer to deal with, a fact which he had not anticipated from the thin and lathy-like appearance of the other, he immediately brought into play not only all his enormous strength, but all his wonderful skill as a wrestler.

And as a result, the stranger, who was no match for him in this line, was twisted from his feet and flung violently to the floor, Captain Pat lending his own weight to increase the effect of the fall, coming down upon the assassin with crushing force.

The shock partially stunned the man, and at the same time forced the knife out of his hand.

The man with the green coat was prompt to take advantage of these facts, and before the other could collect his senses, Pat McGowen snapped a pair of handcuffs upon his wrists.

This ended the struggle, for of course the moment the man was handcuffed it ended the matter. Then Captain Pat arose to his feet.

"Well, young lady, I was just in time," he remarked.

"Just in time," she gasped, repeating the words like a parrot, and then, overcome by the strange experience, fainted dead away.

The detective perceived her eyes closing, noted the gasp which escaped her lips, and comprehending what was coming, sprang forward and caught her as she fell from the chair.

The bed, standing in the center of the apartment by the wall, was between where the girl had been seated and the position occupied by the stranger who had been flung into the extreme end of the room when Captain Pat had tried upon him a wrestling dodge—a sudden, peculiar crook and twist, which the assassin could not possibly guard against, knowing no more about such matters than the man in the moon.

So it was an easy matter for the detective to place this girl upon the bed, sprinkle her face with water from the pitcher which stood on the

wash-stand at the foot of the couch and yet keep his eyes upon the prostrate assassin, his position such that it was impossible for the other to leave the room without encountering him.

The prompt measures adopted by the detective had the desired effect, and Philippa recovered from her faint at about the same moment that the intruder got over the shock of his downfall, and rose slowly to his feet, glaring in rage at the detective, who had so easily succeeded in making him a prisoner.

"There, my girl, you are worth a dozen dead women yet," the detective remarked, soothingly, to Philippa, as he assisted her to rise to a sitting posture on the bed and braced her against the foot-board.

"Oh, sir, how can I thank you?—to you I owe my life!" the girl exclaimed.

"That is all right; this is my business, that's all; the sort of thing I do, for I am a detective officer," Captain Pat replied, briskly.

"I happened to be outside the theater when you came out, and as I generally keep my eyes about me—that is what my profession teaches me to do, you know—I noted this fellow's stealthy movements, and soon came to the conclusion that he was following you and your companions, and so I thought I would take a hand in the game just to see what the scoundrel was up to, and as events have proved, it was a very lucky thing I did."

"Oh, yes; but for your timely arrival I should have been murdered by this wretched man," the girl responded, in trembling accents.

"Nonsense! that is all a sham!" cried the man, now for the first time breaking silence and speaking with a decidedly foreign accent.

A Frenchman apparently from the manner in which he spoke.

"All a sham, eh?" quoth Captain Pat, bestowing an earnest look upon the man with the idea of seeing if he could recognize him.

But he could not recall ever having met the man before and so, as he had a most excellent memory for faces, he came to the conclusion that the other was a stranger.

"Yes, a joke; you comprehend, eh?"

"No; I can't say as I do."

"When I entered it looked more like a tragedy than a joke."

"I saw ze ladie to-night at ze theater—she has ze make of one grand actress in her!" the man exclaimed.

"I am a great lover of ze drama; in my native home, Patee, I go to ze theater every night, but here in zis countree I am poor, I cannot afford ze theater to go, but I am varra queek to recognize the talent all ze same."

"I followed mademoiselle home and play ze tragedy part wiz her dat she shall me a specimen of her skill give."

"I brandish ze knife—I cry kill, kill! that is so zat mademoiselle shall fall ze knees upon and beg wiz me for her life."

"Zat one grand opportunity for ze bit of natural acting would I her give."

"You rush in—you ze play spoil—it is one grand pitee; but it is not true—it vas all one joke."

Captain Pat McGowen was not a man who was easily astonished, for he had been through too many varied experiences not to be hardened against surprises, but on this occasion he was rather amazed at the coolness of the fellow, who delivered his explanation in the most matter-of-fact manner.

The detective didn't believe a word of the tale, for he felt sure that the man did intend to kill the girl, and most surely would have committed the crime if it had not been for his timely arrival.

"Oh, that yarn is too thin!" he declared.

"It is the truth!"

"Bosh!"

"Why should I vant ze mademoiselle to kill?" the other asked, apparently indignant that his word was doubted by the detective officer.

"Now you are asking me too difficult a conundrum, and I ain't good at guessing riddles, anyway. But I suppose you know, miss, why this man bears a grudge against you?" he said, turning to Philippa.

"Indeed I do not," she replied, promptly, "for the man is an utter stranger to me; I never saw him before in my life."

"You see, aha!" cried the Frenchman.

For a moment the detective was puzzled, and then a solution of the mystery occurred to him.

"You have enemies, probably, miss," he observed, "or there are people in the world in whose way you stand and they have hired this man to undertake your death."

"Oh, no; I haven't an enemy in the world, and no acquaintances either with the exception of a few people in an obscure country village where I was brought up, so it is utterly impossible that any one can have any interest in either my life or death."

"It is absurd! Bah! do I look like ze dog of an assassin?" cried the stranger, in a theatrical sort of way.

"Well, some powerful motive urged the man on, for he meant to kill you, in my opinion, and no mistake," persisted the detective, who didn't place the least credence in the stranger's tale.

"To-morrow in the court we may be able to

get some clew to the mystery when this fellow is hauled up before a magistrate.

"Are you going to take me to ze jail?" cried the Frenchman, bristling up with indignation.

"That is my little game."

"I vill not go."

"Oh, yes, you will."

"It is an outrage!"

"You can tell the police judge all about it in the morning."

"I will resist you to ze death!" cried the other angrily, displaying his keen, white teeth like a dog snarling with rage.

"You better not try that game, or I shall be obliged to knock some sense into your head with a club!" Captain Pat exclaimed threateningly, and as he spoke he drew a short locust club from an inside pocket.

"Ze law shall punish you for zis crime, but I vill go 'long you wizout ze use of ze club," responded the Frenchman, having apparently made up his mind that it would be useless to attempt to resist the will of the man who had captured him, and as he spoke he advanced a few steps toward the detective.

"That is the way to talk, and Captain Pat half-turned to the door.

Tois was the opportunity the stranger sought, for no sooner was the attention of the detective turned from him than he wheeled around and plunged head-foremost through the window at the end of the apartment, carrying the sash with him.

The detective uttered a cry of horror.

CHAPTER VI.

PREPARING FOR THE ORDEAL.

AT first Colonel John Andy Jackson did not understand why he could not have an interview with the woman whom he believed to be his wife that very night, but the astute theatrical manager soon talked him out of this idea.

"There isn't any place for such an interview here, you know, my dear fellow," he said.

"To-morrow you can call upon her at her apartments. She occupies a furnished flat on Thirty-fourth street, a nice, quiet place where you can talk this matter over without any danger of interruption."

"She will not be apt to try any gum game—skip out to-night you know, or anything of that kind, will she?" asked the old Southerner, evidently feeling a little doubtful about the matter.

"Oh, no, you can rest assured she will not take any step of that kind," the manager asserted.

"She has altogether too much at stake in this theatrical venture to try any such game."

"Why, my dear fellow, she has about ten thousand dollars invested in this speculation, and if it proves a success, and from present appearances there doesn't seem to be the slightest doubt in regard to that, she will be safe to clear fifty thousand dollars inside of six months."

"And she needn't be frightened anyway," said the old colonel.

"I don't bear any malice because she gave me so tight a squeeze for my life."

"I could see by her eyes that she was scared clean through at the time, and I don't doubt that she reckoned I would be apt to try fer to wring her delicate neck if I got my hands on her."

"Of course, I was enraged at the moment by her taunts, and probably swore like a trooper, fer when I get excited I ain't apt to be keeful how I sling my words around."

"But it is all right now; I will be as gentle with her as a kitten."

"I see you are firm set in your belief that this lady is your long-lost wife," the manager suggested.

"Sart'in! Why, man, I am as sure of it as that I am hyer a living, breathing man to-night."

"I thought it was her the moment she appeared, although that false light hair she wears now makes her look kinde odd, but when she spoke there wasn't the least doubt."

"And then the words she said, too—why, I have heard her say 'em a hundred times."

"Whenever we had a little misunderstanding and came to make up, if she found that she had been a little hasty—and she generally was—she used to come and perch on my knee, and say, 'It's all right, papa, a new leaf I'll turn over.'"

"I tell you, Joe Richmond, when she spit out them air words to-night I could have picked her out of a million women by the voice alone!" and the old man emphasized the statement by bringing the palm of his right hand down with a hearty smack on his knee.

"You will really excuse me, colonel, for making the remark, but I must say I think you have made a mistake in regard to the identity of this lady," Slippery Archy observed, in his oiliest manner.

"Nary time!" responded the other, decidedly.

"The reason I speak is because I have known the lady for about twenty years—I am making a blunder, of course, in letting out the fact that she is a little older than she is willing to acknowledge, but I trust to your discretion, gentlemen, not to allow the matter to go further, for it would injure her professionally if it was

known that she is not the youthful, girlish thing which she appears."

All present bowed.

Then Slippery Archy continued:

"To be exact, it is just twenty-one years since I first met Miss Diana Duclois, and that is her right name, by the way, and not an assumed one."

"She is a French girl by birth, but her mother was English, and she was brought up to speak both French and English, one as well as the other."

The others bent forward eagerly to listen to the story.

"She was a girl of about fourteen when the sudden death of both of her parents threw her upon her own resources," continued the Jew speculator, "and she came from Paris to London for the purpose of seeing some of her mother's relatives, but was unable to find any of them, and as she was not well provided with money, she was obliged to look around for something to do."

"A strange fact about Miss Diana is that, though now she doesn't look to be anywhere near as old as she really is, at that time she looked older than she was, and although barely fourteen appeared to fully eighteen."

"I was running a little music hall garden at that time in London known as the Woodbine Bower, and she came to me for a chance to do something."

"Being pleased with her looks I gave her a chance as a barmaid, and then my stage manager took a fancy to her and gave her an opportunity to appear on the stage. This was the beginning of her professional career, and I have been intimately acquainted with her ever since."

"How many years ago did you say this was?" asked the veteran.

"About twenty-one years back."

"Wa-al, that doesn't prevent her from being the woman I think she is, for it is about twenty-one years since I lost sight of her, and she then only appeared to be a child of about fourteen although she claimed to be eighteen."

The others exchanged glances, and the look which appeared on their faces seemed to say that in their opinion there wasn't the least bit of use in arguing with the Louisiana colonel in regard to this point.

He was certain that Miss Diana was his long-lost wife, and no amount of argument would shake his belief.

A personal interview with the lady alone would open his eyes to the truth.

"If you will meet me here to-morrow at ten o'clock I will conduct you to an interview with Miss Duclois, and then you will soon see that you are mistaken in your conjecture," Slippery Archy remarked.

"Mebbe I am, but I ain't reckoning that way," the other replied, doggedly.

"Might I suggest, Mr. Manwaring, that you keep this matter quiet to-night?" said Colonel Joe Richmond.

"It will not do any good to mention the subject until the performance is over, and it might have a tendency to make the lady nervous and so interfere with the success which she is making."

The manager had a keen eye to the main chance.

"Oh, I wouldn't think of saying anything to-night," the Jew speculator replied, immediately.

"Although it shows that you don't know much about Miss Diana when you are afraid that a trifle like this would disturb her."

"That woman has the gall of a prize-fighter; her cheek is astonishing, and nothing short of a brick house falling on her would be apt to knock her off her pins."

By this time the performance had got well under way again, and from the sound of the applause and laughter which reached the ears of the gentlemen in the manager's office, it was plain that the burlesque troupe was taking the audience by storm.

"It would be a pity to have anything happen to interfere with the run that we are in for," the manager remarked, in the ear of the speculator, as they all rose to depart.

"Don't you be afraid!" replied Slippery Archy, confidently. "It don't make a bit of difference whether she is the woman or not. She is too smart to allow this fellow to bother her, and don't you forget it!"

The colonel suggested that the veteran should remain and see the rest of the performance, offering him the use of his private box, but the grizzled warrior declined the offer.

"No, thank you," he said, "I don't care to see any more of it. I don't want to see the woman who was once my wife capering about in that outlandish rig."

"I'll go home to my hotel and try to possess my soul with patience until the morrow."

"Where are you staying, colonel?" asked the detective.

"At the Astor House; that is my headquarters always when I am in New York."

"Well, I am going down that way and I will walk as far as the Fifth Avenue Hotel with you, if it is agreeable."

"Sart'in it is, and that reminds me I hav'n't expressed my acknowledges to you yet for com-

ing forward to help me out of the scrape in the way you did."

"I reckon those fellows with their sticks would have been apt to have made it pretty warm for me if you hadn't come to my rescue."

"Durn me if you didn't fight as well as you did at Five Forks when your charge that morning cleaned out my camp."

"Oh, don't mention it," Captain Pat replied, lightly. "It is a way I have of getting into scrapes."

"And getting other people out of them," interposed the warrior.

"That's my business now, you see; I am a detective officer."

Then the gentlemen shook hands all round and the party broke up.

The manager and the Jew speculator returned to watch the performance, while Captain Pat and the veteran quitted the theater and proceeded down Broadway toward the hotel.

"Suppose that this woman denies all knowledge of you when you come face to face with her in the morning?" the detective asked.

"Oh, she will never dare to do that, if she is the woman, as I feel sure she is," replied the other, confidently.

"She will own up, of course, and acknowledge the corn."

"Don't you be too certain about that," Captain Pat warned.

"I have had some little dealings with women of her class, and I tell you they are mighty ugly cattle to handle."

"Oh, I don't care anything about her anyway," the other replied. "I was just crazy after her once, but that was an infatuation and it all vanished long ago."

"Why are you anxious to see her then?"

"The child, man, you forget the child!"

"Ah, yes, I understand."

"My child, of course, the babe I never saw, and who was carried away by this woman when she fled, thinking she had killed me."

"The child would be about of age now," Captain Pat observed reflectively.

"By the way, was it a boy or girl?"

"That I never learned; the information which came to me was extremely vague."

"All I could find out was that she had taken refuge in flight and that she had taken a baby with her, a baby whom she had put out to nurse and whom she visited secretly, and the reason for this was as near as I could find out, believing me to have been killed upon the field of battle she had planned to marry a wealthy old planter in the neighborhood, and she was afraid that if the man knew she was incumbered with another man's child the old fellow wouldn't have her."

"I see."

"My return of course upset the little game. Now that I am a wealthy man again I want my child—it is mine, of course, there isn't the least doubt in my mind about it."

By this time they reached the hotel, and Captain Pat, pleading that he had business to attend to, took his departure.

And as he sauntered slowly away after the old gentleman entered the hotel he mused aloud:

"There are rocks ahead in the path of the colonel, I fancy, and I think I will have to keep my eyes upon him."

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN GREEK MEETS GREEK.

THE performance of the burlesque troupe ended amid a tumultuous shout of applause.

There was no mistaking the fact that Miss Diana Duclois and her associates had made the biggest kind of a "hit," to use the theatrical word which denotes that a performance has scored a success.

All the critics who happened to be in the theater—and about all the noted men in that line in the city were present—took pains to congratulate Colonel Richmond and Slippery Archy, who was responsible for the appearance of the troupe in America.

"Big thing!" said one.

"There's millions in it!" cried another.

And twenty similar things were said by these molders of public opinion.

And they were right, too, for never since the days of the appearance of the first company of blonde fair ones in the metropolis had a troupe been received with more enthusiasm.

In her dressing-room the burlesque queen was slowly getting rid of her light and airy costume and resuming her plain every-day garb.

When she had finished dressing, she found Slippery Archy at the door and he conducted her to the *coupé* which was in waiting in the street.

They entered the carriage and the vehicle started.

"What was the house?" Miss Diana asked, abruptly, after the carriage got under way.

"Two dollars over a thousand."

"That was pretty good, but it looked from the stage as if there was more money in than that."

"The first night dead-head list is a big thing here in New York, and it was the manager's idea, as well as my own, to have the theater

packed with people, even if half of them were on the free list, so as to give the idea that the thing was a big success."

"The New Yorkers are a queer people, and they had much rather go to a theater which they feel sure will be crowded to suffocation, than to one where there will be plenty of room."

"Nothing queer about that," the actress retorted. "That is my experience with all people the world over."

"There's nothing succeeds like success."

"By the way, don't you find it a difficult matter to keep your hair bleached all the time?" Manwaring asked, abruptly.

"Eh?" and the burlesque queen looked at the man, as much as to ask what he meant.

"When your hair grows out, of course it is brown, and I should think it would be a difficult task to keep it from showing."

"What on earth are you talking about?"

"About your hair, of course."

"Yes; but what is the meaning of the rubbish that you are saying?"

"But isn't it a difficult matter to keep it bleached?"

"No, it is not, considering that it isn't bleached."

"But you don't mean to say that your hair is naturally blonde?"

"Yes, it just is, and what is the matter with you? What are you bothering yourself about my hair for? Have you been drinking too much wine—celebrating the success?"

"Oh, no; you know I never indulge to excess."

"But, I say, how is it that you never told me that you have lived in New Orleans? I hadn't any idea that you have ever been in this country before."

"No more have I! What put that absurd idea into your head? New Orleans, indeed! What do I know about New Orleans?"

"Not much, I suppose, excepting that you managed too many husbands there, and I say, my dear Diana, how many men have you wedded before you condescended to become my better-half?" the speaker asked, sarcastically.

"You are making a donkey of yourself, and so you had better hold your tongue!" the actress retorted.

"You are getting angry because I have discovered something of the life which you have so carefully concealed."

"I am getting angry to see you act like a fool!" she exclaimed.

"And what is my past life to you, anyway? What business is it of yours?"

"And as to our marriage, as it has never been made public, you can get out of it whenever you choose. You need not be alarmed in regard to any attempt on my part to hold you to your bargain."

"You talked sweetly enough to me, and told me how much money we could make together and I was idiot enough to believe you, but I want you to understand that I am not a woman who will put up with any nonsense, and we are not in England either now, but in the United States, and everybody says that the laws here are so that if two people don't want to live together it is the easiest thing in the world for them to get a divorce."

"So, Mr. Archy Manwaring, if you repent the step which you were so anxious to take in England it will be the easiest thing in the world for you to get out of it here."

This open defiance was more than the speculator had expected.

His idea had been to take the burlesque queen unawares and secure an advantage over her, but it was plain now that the game wouldn't work.

Under the circumstances there wasn't anything for him to do but to make his peace with the angry woman as best he could.

"Oh, come, Diana, I wasn't thinking of anything of that sort. We, of all people in the world, can least afford to quarrel with each other," he said, in his oily, plausible way.

"But I will admit that I was rather annoyed to-night when I learned some particulars of your past life which you have kept secret from me."

The burlesque queen sat bolt upright in the carriage and surveyed her companion with astonishment.

"You learned some particulars of my past life to-night?"

"Yes."

"From whom?"

"Didn't you notice the old fellow who got up in the parquette and spoke to you just after your first entrance?"

"When the row took place?"

"Yes."

"He was in liquor, wasn't he?"

"Oh, no; as sober as a judge!"

"Well, he didn't act as if he was."

"Didn't you understand what the man said?"

"No; I heard him call out something, but I didn't understand what it was, and then when I saw there was going to be a fight I got out of the way, for I have heard that these Americans always use pistols when they get into a row, and I can assure you that I hadn't the least idea of staying on the stage to be shot."

"The man thought that in you he recognized a long-lost wife—a woman who ran away from him carrying his infant child some twenty years ago.

"Just about the time that you made your appearance in London, coming to me at the Woodbine Bower, from France, as you said."

"And so I did come from France!" the woman exclaimed angrily.

"And this man must be a lunatic! Think of what I was when you first met me twenty years ago!

"Was I old enough to be a married woman and the mother of a child?"

"Well, I don't know, Diana; you are an awful deep one, and you were then, too; very close-mouthed about yourself, and I remember I thought at the time that it was very strange that you didn't seem to care to talk about your past life."

"Because I hadn't any!" cried the woman, abruptly. "I was only a child with nothing to reveal and nothing to conceal. But this man is crazy to say that I am his wife. Who is he, anyway?"

"Colonel John Andy Jackson he is called. He was in the war between the States on the Southern side, and I am afraid you will find him a hard customer to deal with."

"Bosh!" exclaimed the burlesque queen, her lip curling in contempt.

"He will soon discover he has made a mistake if he seeks an interview with me."

"I have arranged with him for one to-morrow morning," observed Slippery Archy, narrowly watching the face of the woman as he spoke.

"I saw he was determined to see you, and I thought the more quickly the matter was settled the better."

She nodded in assent and a complacent look appeared upon her face, somewhat to the man's surprise, for he had expected her to show some slight feeling of annoyance.

"That was right; the quicker I get rid of the poor old lunatic the better."

With all his shrewdness the Jew was puzzled.

In his heart of hearts he had about come to the conclusion that the veteran had not made a mistake, and that the actress was the woman whom he supposed her to be.

But now he doubted, for from the way she spoke it was plain she hadn't any idea of what kind of a man Colonel John Andy Jackson was, and this fact would seem to argue that she was not the wife of the veteran, if she was she surely would not look forward to the meeting with so much calmness.

Altogether it was a very much mixed-up affair, and with all his worldly wisdom the wily schemer was at fault.

No more conversation took place between the two on this subject, the matter being quietly dropped by both of them.

In the morning, promptly at the appointed time, Colonel Jackson made his appearance at the theater.

Manwaring was in waiting and conducted the veteran to a cab which was outside, and after entering the vehicle they were driven to the house wherein the burlesque queen had her apartments.

The Jew speculator conducted the old soldier into the presence of the actress, introduced him and then withdrew.

Miss Diana received the gentleman with a gracious smile, apparently quite at her ease, begged him to be seated, and in all respects treated him with as much courtesy as though he had been a person of the greatest consequence.

The veteran was perplexed.

The actress off the stage appeared quite different from what she did when before the footlights, and the likeness to the woman whom he had loved and lost did not appear to be nearly as strong now as it had appeared to him on the previous night.

Still he hadn't any doubt that it was his wife although the lapse of years had changed her greatly. And she still wore the false blonde hair, as he imagined, and this undoubtedly made her look strange to him.

"Catherine, don't you know me?" he exclaimed, extending his hand to her in an appealing way.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE INTERVIEW.

"I BEG your pardon, sir, but you haven't got my name right, don't you know," she replied, smiling sweetly.

The manner in which she spoke was so decidedly English that the veteran appeared disappointed.

The tones were not familiar to his ears and were decidedly different from the ones she had used the night before upon the stage.

The old soldier was not sufficiently familiar with such things to understand that the strain upon the voice when the pitch is made sufficiently high to render the words of the speaker understood in so large a space as the auditorium of a theater changes the tones materially.

And then, too, the lady was now putting on

her "society manners" and was soft of speech and a little affected in her pronunciation.

"Oh, yes, I have," the veteran responded firmly.

"It is useless to attempt to deceive me, Catherine, for I know you even after this lapse of years."

"You have altered a little, but not enough to take you out of my memory."

"I hope you will not be angry when I say that there isn't any sort of doubt, you know, that you have made a mistake," she remarked, smiling as though she thought the matter was rather a good joke.

"But please sit down, for it is so awkward to have you standing, don't you know?"

The colonel sunk slowly into the chair toward which she had waved her jeweled hand with a gesture of entreaty.

He was greatly puzzled.

On the previous night he had been as certain of the woman's identity as he was of his own, but now that he was face to face with her, no garish dress or stage ornaments to disguise, no flaming footlights to throw a sort of glamour over the scene, he began to waver a little.

"Catherine, why do you attempt to deceive me?" he exclaimed, earnestly, after quite a pause, during which he was endeavoring to collect his thoughts, for it was plain that if she was the woman he believed her to be, she was not inclined to own it.

"I do not seek you with any hostile purpose," he continued. "Let the past rest; I do not seek to revive that."

"In all probability one of us was as much to blame as the other, so we will not rake over the embers, lest there might still be some sparks that a touch would cause to flame."

"I come to you as a friend and with no bitter thoughts in my mind, although I bear upon my person the scar of the wound you gave years ago and which brought me nearer death's door than all the perils I encountered upon the battlefield. But, as I said before, I do not bear you any malice for the past."

"When I come to think the matter over now, after this lapse of years, I can see that you and I were never suited to each other, and that it was the height of folly for such a rough old coon as I was to even dream of winning the love of such a girl as you were."

"I bought you with my money, of course, as I would buy a horse or a dog, but with this difference that you were a human and didn't accept the situation and try to make the best of it as the animals would have done."

"Oh, stop, stop, sir," cried the burlesque queen in a fidgety sort of a way, "you really mustn't go on telling me about your private affairs in this way, because I really ought not to listen. I am not the lady you take me to be at all, and I feel sure you will see that I am not when you come to examine into the matter."

"So, sir, before you enter into these private details of your life, won't you please give me a chance to prove to you that I am not the person you take me to be at all?"

Again the veteran stared in perplexity.

The tones of the woman seemed so sincere, and there was such a difference between her now as she sat almost within arm's length of him, and his child-bride of twenty-odd years ago, that he began to think there was a possibility he was mistaken in his supposition that she was the woman who had treated him so badly.

But then the thought came to him that she was an actress, and used to playing all sorts of parts; was it not possible she was acting now?

If it was true, she was playing the rôle to perfection.

The woman saw that she had gained an advantage and she made haste to improve it.

"Now, you know, I'm not much of a business woman, as my time has been pretty well occupied, ever since I was eight years old, in dancing jigs and singing nonsensical songs for the amusement of a lot of gaping idiots, but you, being a man, of course understand how to go to work."

"You think I am one person, I know I am another, now how can we go to work to prove which of us is right in our guess?"

"Don't you see? there must be some way besides your asserting that I am, and my disputing it, by saying that I ain't."

The veteran thought the matter over for a moment, and he saw that with her shrewd woman's wit the burlesque queen had gone right to the heart of the matter.

"The person to whom I refer, a girl who, twenty-one years ago was called Catherine Raymond, and at that time she was about sixteen years old."

"Which would make her about thirty-seven now," the burlesque actress exclaimed, as the colonel paused for a moment.

"Now, sir, will you have the kindness to look at me—look at me closely—I am not now on the stage with my 'war-paint' on—and say if you think I am as old as that?"

And as she spoke she looked the gentleman straight in the eyes, a coquettish smile upon her lips.

The veteran was nonplused by the question. If he had been in a court of law, under oath,

he would not have been willing to swear, to the best of his judgment and belief, that the lady was a day over twenty-five.

And to his eyes, accustomed to the tricks and artifices used by womankind to make themselves attractive, there did not appear any evidence that the actress owed any of her charms to the devices of art.

But she was "made-up" though, both red and white having been used, despite her declaration that she was innocent of "war-paint," but the adornments had been applied with such skill that it was almost impossible for these "aids to beauty" to be detected.

"No, I should not think you were anywhere near that age, but I reckon I am not as good a judge in such matters as I might be."

"My name is Diana Duclois. I was born in Paris just twenty-six years ago, and at the time of which you speak I was consequently only some five years old, therefore I could not very well be married to you."

"I suppose you speak of America—of the United States—it is here that you were married?"

"Yes, in the city of New Orleans."

"That is a long way off, I believe—in the extreme South, is it not?"

"It is."

"I supposed so, for I am to play there with my troupe on our tour through the country, and the manager who is located there told me that it was the land of eternal summer, and promised me I should eat oranges which I could pick from the tree with my own hand, so charming, don't you see," and the actress fairly beamed on the old, warm-hearted veteran, who became more and more perplexed.

His Catherine was no such woman as this, but rather a sullen creature, very little given to merriment, flighty and wayward, and she could no more carry on such a conversation as this than she could have flown through the air like a bird.

Still, many years had elapsed, experience and education might have worked wonders.

"This is my first visit to America, and, consequently, as a girl of five years, I could not have been married to you in New Orleans."

"If you are my Catherine you were not only my wife but the mother of my child, whom you stole away when you fled like a thief in the night, after inflicting upon me what appeared to be a mortal wound."

"Oh, goodness gracious! what a monster you are trying to make me out!" she exclaimed, with a pretty affectation of being very much alarmed.

"It is the child I want—if you will tell me what became of the child I will never trouble you more!" pleaded the old man, stretching out his sun-tanned, brawny hands to her.

"Oh, sir, if I knew, believe me I would gladly tell you," the actress exclaimed, a touch of pathos in her voice.

"What was its name—was it a boy or a girl?"

"I don't know—I don't know anything about it, excepting that there was a child—my child, of course, and when my erring wife fled she took the babe with her."

"I am an old man, with hardly a tie to bind me to life, and I hunger for that child as the wearied traveler in the Arabian desert hungers for the green oasis which means life to him."

"I am a rich man, with not a relative in the world. All that I have will go to the child, if I can only succeed in finding it."

"If you are my Catherine I beg you to tell me of my child. I bear you no ill-will for the past—let that be forgotten."

"If money will be any inducement to you, I will give you twenty—thirty—fifty thousand dollars for my lost one!"

There were tears in the eyes of the actress, real ones, no sham about them, and she shook her head mournfully.

"You are really making me cry, don't you see?" she half sobbed. "Oh, if I could only give you your child, I wouldn't want any money!"

"But please try to believe that I am telling you the truth when I say I don't know anything about the matter, for I am not the woman you take me to be. My name is Diana Duclois and I never was in this country before in my life!"

The veteran was in a quandary and more than half inclined to believe the woman spoke the truth.

He rose to his feet.

"One last question. My Catherine had brown hair—"

"And mine is golden, and real, too—see!" and she bent her head so that the colonel could perceive that the blonde hair was real and no wig.

This seemed to be convincing proof, and so, with an apology for his intrusion, the veteran withdrew, a sadly disappointed man.

CHAPTER IX.

AN ODD CHARACTER.

THE burlesque queen rose to her feet and paced hurriedly up and down the room for a few moments.

"My, my!" she exclaimed, nervously, "this is really a distressing case!"

"Fifty thousand dollars for the child! My goodness! these Americans are given to loud figures!"

"I have met with plenty of people in my time who would undertake to find his child for that money, and if they couldn't find the right one they would be apt to produce another that would answer just as well."

"Ah!"

A half-scream escaped from the lips of the woman, and it was occasioned by the bearded head of a man being poked out through the door of a closet in the rear part of the room.

The actress happened to be looking in that direction and so saw the head the moment it appeared.

The burlesque queen was no timid girl to yield spellbound to fear at the appearance of danger; and so, the moment the head appeared, she gave utterance to the cry of alarm and sprung to the bell which communicated with the janitor's apartments, where a full corps of servants were in attendance, by day and night, for this was a "high-toned" flat, with all the modern conveniences.

"Hold on! don't give the alarm—don't you know me?"

For a moment the burlesque queen hesitated.

There was a look in her eyes which seemed to say that she recognized the man, but was in doubt whether to admit it or not.

Perceiving that she hesitated, the man came out boldly into the room.

He was a tall, rather good-looking fellow, neatly clad in a dark business suit, with a light-weight overcoat, also dark.

As far as his clothes went he had the appearance of a gentleman, but his head was the head of a pirate.

His hair was black as jet, and curled in little crispy ringlets all over his head, a full, black beard, short, but very curly—more like a negro's wool than aught else—covered all the lower part of his face.

And the little of his face that the hair left visible was tanned almost as dark as the complexion of an Indian; his hands were also tanned as badly as his face, and yet they were long and slender, not the hands of a man who had been used to doing hard work.

This was not strange though, for the man was evidently a gentleman; one could plainly see that from the way he carried himself.

"Don't give the alarm—there is not the least occasion for it, I assure you," he hastened to say, seeing that the actress had not made up her mind what to do.

"I am not in the least bit dangerous now, and you really need just such a man as I am near you, for I can see plainly that all is not going to be smooth sailing for you."

"There will be plenty of rocks and shoals, and there will be lots of work for a man like myself."

"I am very humble—very submissive, and will serve you like a faithful dog."

"I can keep in the background too, so that no one will know that I am around, and you need not fear that I will compromise you in any way."

"What is the meaning of this disguise?"

"It is a good one, isn't it?" he said, complacently, answering one question by asking another.

"Yes, it is."

"You didn't recognize me until I spoke?"

"I did not, although I felt instinctively that you were no stranger."

"That is what I want. If my get-up is good enough to deceive the eyes of the sharpest woman that breathes the breath of life, it will answer."

"But why do you wear it—I don't understand?"

"I am supposed to be shut up yonder—across the water, you know."

"Yes."

"Well, I am at liberty here; doesn't that explain why I don't dare go around in my natural person?"

"No one would ever be apt to follow you across the water."

"Oho, you don't know about that," he retorted with a laugh, full of cunning.

"Those fellows have long arms sometimes, and they reach a terrible distance. But they will not reach me."

"I do not think there is much danger of their doing anything of the kind, disguise or no disguise."

"It is always best to be on the safe side; an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

"But come, I say; you haven't answered my question yet. Can't you use a man like myself?"

The burlesque queen shook her head slowly.

"Oh, yes, you can!" the other exclaimed, persuasively. "I will not cost you much, and you are booked for a big innings here, according to the newspapers."

"You have captured these Yankees, and they will be only too glad to fill your coffers with their coin."

"What is a hundred or two dollars to a wo-

man like yourself, who is safe to make thousands before you are a year older?"

"You forget there are others to share my gains with."

"Oh, no, I don't; this sneak of a Jew, Slippery Archy, for instance."

"I hear that you are married to him."

"One hears a good many things besides prayers if they keep their ears open," the woman retorted.

"Oh, it is nothing to me, you know; I don't care two-pence about it, although you didn't take the trouble to advise with me about the matter or bid me to the wedding," he remarked with careless indifference.

"Go your own gait—make your own bed, for it is you that will lie on it."

"I will own to you, though, that I despise the sneaking Jew!" he cried, abruptly.

"And when you get tired of the fellow and want to get rid of him, just tip me the wink and I will twist his neck for you with as little ceremony as though he was a chicken."

Instead of being alarmed by this ferocious speech the burlesque queen laughed outright.

"Upon my word, if my wily friend Slippery Archy were to know of this cool proposition of yours it would be apt to frighten him out of a year's growth, for he is not renowned for his courage," she said.

"You believe that I would be as good as my word, don't you?" he questioned.

Diana looked at him intently for a moment, and he bore the scrutiny well, although his eyes blinked and trembled in a strange manner.

"Yes; I think you would do the deed though you knew the gallows would be the result."

"Oh, I'm all right as far as that is concerned!" he exclaimed.

"You know that the hemp is not spun that will hang me."

"I believe that is true; but in regard to your offer to serve me, to speak frankly, wouldn't it be like having a tame tiger in the house to attach you to my fortunes?"

"Like that beast you might turn and rend the hand that fed you."

"No, no, there isn't the least danger of that!" the other protested. "I can understand though why you are loth to trust me. I did turn upon you once, and the lesson you gave me was quite sufficient to last me unto my dying day."

"But you have odd spells once in a while; when those are upon you will not this impression be apt to be forgotten?" the burlesque queen asked, slowly.

"Oh, no, and it is a queer thing connected with those spells which some time come upon me, that the moment I get under their influence I begin to feel the most horrible terror in regard to you, and my greatest desire is to keep out of your sight."

"That is strange!"

"No, the lesson you gave me was so severe that it made an indelible impression on my memory, and when the spells come on the horrible torture I underwent come immediately to my mind."

"The explanation is possible, but in regard to your offer I don't really see how you can be of any service to me, but I will provide for you all the same for the sake of old times."

"How much money per week will answer you?"

"You propose to put me on a regular salary, eh? Well, that is a capital idea."

"My wants are moderate, and when I am myself I can pick up a decent living at the billiard table. Is ten dollars a week too steep a figure?"

"Oh, no, that is all right. Here is the first ten—and here is twenty more that I will make you a present of in case you need anything," and the actress, taking the bills from her pocket-book as she spoke, placed them in the hands of the other.

His eyes sparkled and an exclamation of satisfaction escaped from his lips.

"You were always generous, and now in return for this I propose to do you a service."

"In my place of concealment in yonder closet I overheard all that passed between you and this old war-horse."

"Yes, he has a strange idea in his head."

"True, and although you succeeded in satisfying him, yet, mark my words, he will not remain satisfied."

"He is of the bloodhound, bull-dog breed, and will return again and again to the attack."

"Oh, you give too much heed to the matter. Even supposing that I was the woman what could he do to injure me?" the actress exclaimed, contemptuously.

"A man of his nature is liked a red Indian, a thirst for vengeance once awakened never dies, and he would be sure to find some way to injure you."

"I am not afraid of it!"

"You need not be for I will silence him."

"No, no, you must not—there isn't any need for you to commit such a crime! You must not touch him!"

"In all things but this one your word will be to me as law, but in this I must have my own way," he replied, his eyes shining with fire.

"When I look upon that man I have a peculiar hot feeling in my head here—I feel as if at some

remote period he wrought me a deadly injury. I cannot remember what it was, for back of a certain time all is void in my mind, all dusky space full of dancing imps but nothing tangible, and, as near as I can make out, this old man is the master of the imps. I will kill him, and then perhaps the imps will disappear. But you needn't worry, for you will know nothing of it. I must be going now, adieu!"

And then this odd character took his departure as abruptly as he had appeared.

CHAPTER X.

THE FATE OF THE ASSASSIN.

CAPTAIN PAT MCGOWEN had seen many a desperate attempt in his life of adventure, but this reckless leap of the handcuffed assassin through the window outdid anything that had ever come in his way.

"The scoundrel will be smashed into a jelly!" he cried, in horror, as he rushed to the window.

But sometimes in cases of this sort there seems to be a special providence which protects the desperate and determined soul.

As the reader will remember, the room occupied by Miss Philippa was situated on the third story, so that when the desperate assassin sprang headlong through the window, carrying the sash with him, a fall of fully forty feet awaited him.

But so determined was the desperado upon escaping from the trap in which he found himself, that he took the leap without the slightest hesitation.

Stretched across the yard were pulley-lines for the convenience of the tenants of this big barracks, so that each set of apartments had their own clothes-lines independent of their neighbors.

Down through two sets of these lines, one beneath the other, crashed the man, the ropes snapping under his weight but affording enough resistance to break his fall and sending him whirling around in the air like a wheel.

Directly below the window a shed projected from the building, and through the roof of this the man crashed as though it had been made of paper.

The noise aroused the denizens of the neighborhood, for it was a locality where the inhabitants contrived to lengthen the day by sitting up a good part of the night, and windows were thrown up in a hurry, heads protruding in every direction.

Various cries of alarm were uttered, for a goodly number of the people who poked their heads out of the windows were more or less under the influence of strong drink, and so, without having the least idea of what had taken place, some cried "Murder!" others, "Fire!" and then there was a unanimous yell for the police.

Captain Pat had arrived at the window in time to witness the descent of the assassin, and when he saw how the clothes-lines and then the roof had broken his fall, the idea flashed upon him that it was possible the man might escape without serious injury, although his first idea was that the fellow would be killed outright.

"Maybe I can nab him again!" he cried.

"I'll be back in a moment—just as soon as I see how the rascal is!" he said to the girl as he hurried by her.

His idea now was to get down to the yard in time to arrest the fellow before he could get away.

But, in this uncertain life, plans, no matter how carefully laid, cannot always be carried out.

Captain McGowen rushed out into the entry and down the narrow stairs at the top of his speed.

In marvelous quick time he reached the entry below, but as he turned to descend the second flight, a stout Irish lady, with very few clothes on, rushed from her apartment in an agony of fear, and under the impression that the house was on fire, threw her arms around the detective.

"Oho! for the love of Heaven save me, wurra, wurra!" she yelled, at the top of her lungs.

"Let me go, madam, there's no danger," exclaimed Captain Pat, endeavoring to tear himself loose.

"Oho! take me along! Don't leave me here to be burnt to death!" she wailed.

"Will you let go of me, you idiot? there's no fire!" yelled the detective in a rage, furious at being thus detained at such a critical moment, and he tried to push the woman from him, and as the entry was but dimly lighted, the motions of the two appeared to the eyes of some of the neighbors, who at this moment made their appearance upon the scene, as though they were engaged in a fight, and a shout was instantly set up.

"Oho! a blaggard is murderin' Mrs. O'Toole!" This slogan at once brought the O'Toole himself to the front.

He had gone to bed with a bottle of good old Irish whisky under his jacket, and so had not been awakened at the first alarm.

And now when he made his appearance with nothing on but a red flannel shirt and an old pair of breeches, but well-disguised in liquor,

he presented an extremely picturesque appearance.

Uttering his wild war-cry, he made a rush at the "blaggard" who was struggling with his wife.

Captain Pat was now obliged to give his undivided attention to the new attack.

Unable to release himself from the woman's firm grip, he utilized her as a breastwork.

And the result was that the ponderous fist of the O'Toole came down with a tremendous whack upon the shoulders of his better half, forcing from her a cry of pain which rung through the house.

"Oho! it's kilt I am, ye blaggard," she howled.

But Mrs. O'Toole was wrong in this conjecture, in fact she was worth a dozen dead women, for the way she turned upon the assailant who had dared to attack, without giving her a chance to prepare for war, was a caution.

The detective endeavored to take advantage of this diversion to escape, but some of the other tenants, eager to take a hand in the "fun," surrounded him, and the first thing he knew he found himself in the center of a lively skirmish.

He hated to have recourse to his club, but there wasn't any help for it, so drawing his baton he laid about him lustily.

Roars of pain soon rose on the air, and then the combatants began to retreat, and an open passage was left for the detective to escape down the stairs, leaving the O'Toole to the tender mercies of his better half, who, not recognizing him in the darkness, had succeeded in getting him down and was "b'ating" him in good old Irish style, *a la* Donnybrook.

Ten minutes of precious time had been wasted by this unfortunate occurrence, and when Captain Pat reached the yard and hurried into the shed, expecting to see the assassin stretched upon the ground, pretty badly bruised, he wasn't there.

For a moment the astute detective gazed around him in astonishment, just as if he expected to see the man who had made the desperate leap lurking in some corner.

But as a rat would have found it difficult to hide himself in the place, it was clearly impossible for a human to do so.

There is only one explanation. The assassin, by one of those odd chances which happen in this life more often than the average man is willing to believe, had escaped without serious injury, and, thanks to the detective being detained by the row on the stairs, managed to escape before Captain Pat could arrive on the scene.

And once the man was out of the house, the chances were a thousand to one that he could not be followed.

"The only thing I can do is to find out from the girl who he is, and then I can easily lay him by the heels," the detective murmured as he turned to retrace his steps.

By this time the free fight in the entry had come to an end, thanks to the vigorous interference of a couple of stalwart officers, who wielded their clubs with right good will.

Captain Pat found the young lady in full possession of her senses when he reached her apartment, having entirely recovered from the terrible fright which the unexpected attack of the intruder occasioned her.

But to the amazement of Captain McGowen, she declared she hadn't the least idea why the intruder should assail her.

"I never saw the man before in my life," Philippa declared.

"That is, I cannot remember that I ever did, and I have a very good memory for faces too."

"Have you any enemies who might wish to do you harm?"

"Not one in the world to my knowledge."

The detective reflected upon the matter for a few moments.

"Of course there must be some reasonable explanation to the mystery; such a desperate attack would not be made without a motive."

"Men do not usually risk thrusting their heads into the hangman's noose without a good and sufficient reason."

"It may be possible that you have enemies without being aware of the fact," the detective remarked after a pause, during which he had been thinking the matter over.

"This man may only be the tool of some party, or parties, who remain in the background."

"Now, for instance, if there was some property at stake, some inheritance to which you are the heir."

"Oh, no, there isn't any such thing," the girl declared.

"I am an orphan, and as far as I know I haven't a relative in the world."

"But do you know all about your parents?" Captain Pat asked, anxious to get a clew to the mystery.

"You may be the heir to some property without your being conscious of the fact."

"I do not think it is possible," Philippa replied, with a doubtful shake of the head.

"My father was only a poor mechanic—a carpenter by trade, who died when I was a girl, and my mother a hard-working woman, who

supported herself by taking in washing, and she too died when I was about six years old, so there isn't the least bit of mystery in regard to them."

"But some relative of your parents may have been wealthy and you may be the heir," Captain Pat observed. For upon some such theory only could he account for the desperate attack made upon the life of the girl.

"Oh, yes; it is possible, of course, but I don't think it is very probable, for I remember to have heard my mother say that both she and my father had few relatives and that all of them were so poor that no assistance could be looked for from any of them."

"Well, there was some reason for the attack, of course, and I shall make it my business to find out what it was, for my curiosity is excited; but I will not detain you any longer to-night."

"With your permission I will call upon you to-morrow, and you can give me a sketch of your life, as it will be necessary for me to become familiar with all the facts of the case. I am a detective-officer by profession, and of course a matter of this kind is right in my line."

"My name is McGowen—Captain Patrick McGowen, and very much at your service."

Philippa thanked him in a suitable manner for she was deeply touched by his kind offer, and then the detective took his departure.

"A mighty nice little lady," McGowen soliloquized as he descended to the street.

"I shall take great pleasure in looking into this matter. Of course there's some powerful motive at the back of this ferocious attack, but I will probe the matter to the bottom if it lies in the power of man so to do."

By this time the neighborhood had settled down to its usual midnight calm and only a single man was in sight as the detective walked up the street toward Broadway.

The person was a portly, well-dressed gentleman, as far as the detective could make out, for he was some distance off, but from his rather uncertain gait Captain Pat came to the conclusion that he was under the influence of liquor.

"He's just in the condition to fall an easy prey to some of the night-hawks," the detective soliloquized as he watched the stranger.

Hardly had the words left his lips when two dark forms sprung from the gloom of a convenient doorway and seized the unsuspecting wayfarer.

One of them clasped him around the neck while the other went for his pockets.

Drawing his revolver Captain Pat dashed immediately to the rescue.

CHAPTER XI.

A NEW YORK JUDGE.

As we have said, the stranger was a portly man, well and powerfully built, and he was not so much under the influence of liquor as to be unable to help himself.

Although taken completely by surprise by the unexpected attack, yet he made a vigorous resistance, but there isn't the least doubt that he would have been half-killed, and then robbed by the ruffians, if it had not been for Captain Pat's unexpected aid.

The night marauder who had seized him by the throat, choked him so that it was impossible for him to give an alarm and call assistance.

McGowen's appearance took the ruffians completely by surprise, for he had approached so noiselessly that neither one of the two had the least idea he was in the neighborhood until he was upon them.

With the butt-end of the revolver he dealt the man who had the stranger by the throat a blow on the head which felled him to the ground as if he had been shot.

The other immediately took to his heels.

"Surrender, surrender, or I'll put a ball into you!" cried Captain Pat as he followed in pursuit.

The only effect of this warning was to make the fellow increase his pace.

Finding that it was useless to waste words upon him the detective fired, and being an excellent shot, succeeded in putting a bullet in the leg of the fugitive.

The man uttered a yell of pain and then tumbled to the sidewalk.

"You would have it," cried the detective, "although I gave you fair warning."

And having disabled ruffian Number Two, he turned his attention to desperado Number One.

The man had been stunned by the blow on the pate so dexterously administered by the strong-armed detective, but being a bull-headed scoundrel, speedily recovered from the shock, and was on the point of attempting to get on his feet when the detective came up.

It only took a moment for Captain Pat to spring a pair of steel handcuffs on the wrists of the man and so secure him.

And hardly was this job accomplished when a couple of policemen made their appearance on the scene, attracted by the sound of the firing.

They immediately took charge of the ruffians.

By this time the stranger had recovered from the effects of the choking which he had received, and was able to give an account of himself.

"The infernal scoundrel's pretty nearly killed me, by George!" he exclaimed.

The man was enough under the influence of liquor to render his legs a little unsteady, and to slightly muddle his brain, but he could talk well enough.

And now that the detective got a good look at the gentleman he immediately recognized him, for he was one of the well-known men-about-town.

In fact, few men in the metropolis were more familiar to the general public than Judge William Goodfellow.

The judge was a man of fifty, massive in figure, portly in appearance, and though his face was rather fat and puffy, yet he would readily pass for a good-looking man.

He had iron-gray hair and a short iron-gray beard.

By profession he was a lawyer, but for the last ten years had been so busily engaged in politics that he had entirely neglected his former occupation.

He was a leading light in one of the "Halls," the members of which are powers in city politics.

The judge had filled numerous "fat" local offices and rumor said he had made a fortune out of politics, in a "crooked" way, of course, so it was openly asserted by men who had no love for the judge, and even some of his friends, in confidence, admitted that the judge may have been a "little imprudent" in some respects, but if both enemies and friends were correct about this, neither the one nor the other were able to put their fingers on any particular act of evil-doing, so careful had the judge been about his acts.

Outside of politics the judge passed for a jolly, good fellow, fond of all sorts of amusements, the theater in particular, and, being a bachelor, led a pretty lively life.

Both of the policemen recognized the judge as soon as he spoke and nodded respectfully to him.

"It's all right now, judge; we have got them safe enough," one of the policemen remarked.

The wounded man had been assisted to his feet—the wound was but a slight one—and, in company with the policemen who had taken him in charge, limped to where the judge was standing.

"It is all a mistake," protested the hurt ruffian who was evidently the chief of the two.

"We took you for another bloke ag'in' whom we have a grudge, and we went in for to do him up. We wasn't a-goin' to go 'through you.'"

"Oh, no; of course not," remarked the judge sarcastically, as he surveyed the two men with a critical eye.

The judge's practice as a lawyer had been almost entirely in the criminal line, and he took his title of judge from the fact that he had once sat on the "bench" as a police justice, so he was about as well acquainted with the rascals of the metropolis as any man in it.

Both of these men, though, were strangers to him.

Goodfellow's idea in examining them had been to discover whether they were acquaintances of his or not.

If the scoundrels had been residents of his district and likely to be useful on election day, he would have been inclined to "go light" on them, but as they were strangers he was willing to allow the law to take its way.

"Do you know these men, officers?" the judge demanded.

Both of the metropolitans shook their heads, and then they turned inquiring glances upon the detective-officer.

"Mebbe Captain McGowen might know 'em," one of them suggested.

The judge pricked up his ears at the mention of the name. Although well acquainted with the detective by reputation, personally the captain was unknown to him.

McGowen shook his head.

"No, they are strangers to me."

"We ain't in the crooked business!" exclaimed the wounded man, in a dogged sort of way. "It's all a mistake, I tell you!"

The assertion fell on doubtful ears, though, for all of the hearers fancied they understood the facts in the case.

The pair were either imported ruffians who had come from some other city, or else amateurs who were just beginning a life of crime.

In either case the judge felt that he was not called upon to interfere, as he would have been likely to do if the two men had been well-known ruffians, residents of his district, whose votes—and fists—would be apt to be of service on election day.

"Run them in, officers!" exclaimed the judge, with a judicial wave of the hand.

"I will appear against them in the morning, for high-handed outrages of this sort must be put a stop to."

"If it had not been for the timely arrival of this gentleman"—and the judge bowed to the detective—"it is quite probable that the fellows might have done me a serious injury."

"Captain McGowen, I am pleased to make your acquaintance, sir," and he extended his

hand to the detective. "I have often heard of you, but this is the first time I have ever had the pleasure of meeting you."

"It is the same way with myself," responded the detective, greeting the other in the politest manner, although he was a man for whom he had little respect.

Then the Metropolitans departed with their prisoners, and the politician and the detective walked up the street toward Broadway.

"Of course, Captain McGowen, to speak of a reward to such a man as you is out of the question," the judge remarked, in the oily way he put on when he wished to make a favorable impression.

"But I hold myself your debtor all the same, though; in fact, it may be possible that I owe my life to you, for that fellow who had me by the throat was choking me in such a way that it would only have taken a very few minutes to have cut my thread of life in twain."

"In fact, I feel a deuced sight more shaken up than I have been for many a long day, and I think a little wine will do me good."

"Will you join me in a social glass? I will not take no for an answer, you know."

"I shall be delighted, of course; but in regard to the trifling service I was able to render you to-night, it isn't worth speaking about."

"Oh, that is all right, of course, but I shall consider myself your debtor all the same, until I get a chance to square the account."

"Anyhow, we'll have a rouse to-night. I know an all-night place on upper Broadway where they will be apt to treat us well, if we can only find a coach to take us there."

There wasn't any trouble in regard to this, for on reaching Broadway a coach was secured, and soon the pair were in a private room in the all-night saloon.

One of the principal reasons that induced the detective to go with the judge was to satisfy his curiosity in regard to what the politician was doing in the locality where he had been assaulted at such an hour, for he surmised that something out of the common had brought the judge there.

The politician had been drinking just enough to make him inclined to be talkative, and under the influence of the new supply of liquid stimulant allow the secret to escape him.

He had become infatuated with the new face on the Bijou boards, Miss Philippa Edmonds, and learning her residence from one of the theater underlings, had sallied down to that neighborhood with the idea of taking a look at the surroundings.

"Perfectly ridiculous, you know, and if I hadn't too much wine on board I never should have thought of such a thing, and as it is, if it hadn't been for you the adventure would undoubtedly have cost me dearly," the judge admitted.

McGowen listened and smiled, but in his heart of hearts he said to himself:

"No, no, Judge Goodfellow, the girl is not for you, for I shall make it my business to look after her."

The politician little dreamed that when he made a confidant of the detective he was raising up a lion in his path.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SOUTHERNER SEEKS ADVICE.

CAPTAIN PAT MCGOWEN had a cosy set of offices on Broadway near Union Square, for since he had resigned from the Police Department and set up for himself he had managed to build up a profitable business.

He had two experienced gentlemen in the detective line associated with him, not a particularly large force, but it was Captain Pat's idea to do a lucrative business rather than a large one.

Petty cases he would not have anything to do with.

There were plenty of private detectives in New York glad to jump at anything which promised a ten-dollar bill, and to such men Captain McGowen directed clients where cases were of slight importance.

If there wasn't a hundred dollars in the matter he did not care to have anything to do with it.

About half-past eight on the morning which succeeded the night on which occurred the stirring events related in our last chapters, Captain Pat made his appearance at his office, looked over the reports of the previous day's work, gave directions in regard to that day's programme, and then departed.

Straight to the apartments of the young actress he went, arriving there about nine o'clock, as he had arranged on the preceding night, his purpose being to gain from her full particulars regarding her past life.

Her story was soon told, but she could add but little to what the detective already knew.

The story was all straight enough and there did not seem to be the least mystery about it.

Captain Pat was puzzled.

As far as he could see there wasn't the least reason why any one should wish to do the girl harm, and why the stranger should make such a desperate attack upon her was a puzzle too great for the detective, able as he was, to unravel.

Of course there wasn't any doubt in his mind that there was some powerful motive at the back of the act, for men, no matter how desperate they may be, do not generally risk the gallows without good and sufficient reasons.

"For the present nothing can be done except to await the course of events," the detective remarked, when the girl had finished her narration.

"I haven't a clew to go on, and I must wait until the chapter of accidents gives me one."

"In the mean time you must keep your eyes open and if you see this man again notify me immediately."

Philippa promised to do so, and Captain Pat took his departure, decidedly impressed with the young lady.

"She is too nice a girl to be exposed to the temptations which attend a public professional life," he mused, as he proceeded toward his office again.

"It was a lucky chance which gave me an inkling as to the ideas of this scalawag of a judge, and I fancy I shall have to do my best to spoil his little game."

On his arrival at his office, which was not until noon, Captain Pat found a visitor anxiously awaiting his coming, and it was no other than the Southerner, John Andy Jackson.

When the detective made his appearance the veteran begged the favor of a private interview, saying that he wished to consult him in regard to an important matter.

Of course Captain Pat expressed his pleasure at being able to be of service to the other in any way, and ushered the Southerner into his private office.

"I have come to you because they tell me there isn't a man in the country who can beat you in getting right at the heart of a mystery," the veteran explained, after the two were seated.

"Possibly that statement flatters me somewhat, yet there isn't any doubt that I have been very successful in some difficult matters."

"It is about this business of mine that I want your advice. I suppose you remember why it was I kicked up the row in the opera house?"

"Oh, yes, and I was greatly impressed with your strange story. I regard it as being about as odd a one as ever came to my knowledge."

"Wa-al, you know, I felt just as sart'in that I was on the right track when I claimed that woman for my long-lost wife as I do that I am a living man!" the veteran asserted.

"Oh, yes, I saw that plainly enough at the time."

"Wa-al, I saw her this morning, just as it was arranged I should do last night, you know, and mighty little satisfaction I got out of the interview."

"She did not acknowledge the corn then?"

"Nary time!"

"And do you still feel certain that she is your wife—that you haven't made a mistake in regard to the matter?"

"Wa-al, now you have got me," the other admitted.

"I am all mixed up about the matter. When I look in the woman's face there doesn't seem to me to be the least doubt that she is the one who treated me so badly years ago, although her hair isn't the same color and in other respects she has altered greatly."

"But she denies the soft impeachment, eh?"

"Oh, yes; she will not have it at all; declares I have been deceived by an odd resemblance and that she never was in this country before."

"That is the statement her manager made."

"Yes, I know it; there isn't a bit of evidence to back up my claim, and as far as appearance goes, if she is my wife, she looks to be fully fifteen years younger than she really is."

"The age of a man or woman is sometimes a very difficult matter to get at," the detective remarked thoughtfully.

"In my own experience I have known parties who held their own so well with time that if I had not been positive in regard to their ages I should have taken them to be fully ten or fifteen years younger than they really were."

"Then, too, the woman didn't seem to be a bit like what she used to be. In the old time she was abrupt and plain-spoken, and not particularly careful in regard to the language she used, either, for she hadn't much education; but now she is as ladylike and particular in her talk as though she had moved in the best of society all her life."

"Twenty years have elapsed, you know, and in that length of time there is ample space for a defective education to be polished up."

"Wa-al, I must own up beat," the veteran observed, with a doubtful shake of the head.

"Being so sure that she was my wife I hadn't the least doubt that if I could get face to face with her I could make her own up."

"I didn't expect that," Captain Pat observed.

"I fancied from the beginning that you would have a difficult job in bringing her to book, for I could see with half an eye that she was an uncommon smart woman, and if she thought it was to her advantage to deny the truth most assuredly she would not own up."

"But I explained to her that I didn't bear her any ill-will for the past," said Colonel Jackson.

"I was willing to let bygones be bygones. All that I hankered after was to get on the track of the child—the baby that she stole away from me when she cut and run. And I can't see why she should not be willing to let me know the truth; it can't make any difference to her now, as far as I can see."

"Only that by giving any information in regard to the child she would be admitting that she was the person you take her to be."

"Wa-al, what difference would it make if she did?"

"Not much, only that if you were disposed to be ugly you might make trouble for her."

"Yes, but I gave her my word that I wouldn't," the veteran said, in his earnest, simple way, just as if he was satisfied that no one would think of using better security.

The detective laughed.

"My dear colonel, weighty as that assurance is to you and to all who know you, yet to such a woman, as I suspect this burlesque actress to be, it conveys no assurance of safety."

"If she does not admit that she is your runaway wife, and you are unable to prove that she is—and from the present outlook the chances are about a thousand to one that you cannot prove it—she is perfectly safe from any attack, and you must admit, colonel, she would not be wise to place herself in your power, for it may be possible that she doesn't know what has become of the child."

"I never thought of that," the veteran observed, thoughtfully.

"Of course, following the profession I do, I am obliged to make a close study of human nature, and experience has satisfied me that there are mothers in this world, who are not even gifted with the instinct of the brutes of the field and the birds of the air, as far as their children are concerned, but will desert the helpless little things without the slightest compunction, apparently."

"Now from what I have seen of this woman—jumping to a conclusion merely from her looks—I should say she was one who would not be apt to allow anything to come between her and the end at which she desired to arrive."

"She appears to be resolute and determined, and it seems to me to be quite within the bounds of possibility that, if she is the woman you take her to be, finding the child was an incumbrance in her flight, she abandoned it."

"If my supposition is correct, of course, she wouldn't be able to give you any information."

The veteran pondered over the matter for a moment.

"Then you can't suggest any more in this hyer game just now?" he said, finally.

"Not at present. All you can do is to set a watch upon the woman and wait."

"Speaking of a watch reminds me that I have a notion that somebody is playing the spy upon me," the colonel remarked, abruptly.

"Aha! that is worth looking into!" cried Captain Pat.

"Give me the facts in the case."

"After I left this woman's house I went to my hotel, the Astor, you know, to meditate over the puzzle, and as I sat in the office I caught a man's eye fixed on me, and when the fellow saw I noticed him he sauntered away."

"Then, after awhile, I came to the conclusion to consult you; then when I left the hotel I noticed the fellow on the steps."

"I took a car down-town, got off at your office here, and, hang me! if the rascal wasn't on the other side of the street."

"Only one person would be apt to put a spy upon your track."

"That is what I thought."

"This woman!"

"Exactly!"

"It is a false move, and may give me a chance."

Five minutes later the colonel was in the street and Captain Pat on the watch.

CHAPTER XIII.

ENTRAPPED.

THE plan had been speedily arranged between the detective and the colonel.

The veteran was to proceed up Broadway until he came to the junction of that thoroughfare and Sixth avenue, and then he was to turn about and retrace his steps until he came to Twenty-third street, and at that point he was to take a car to the Astor House, which, as the reader familiar with the metropolis knows, is down-town opposite the Post-office.

The idea of this movement was to give the spy a chance to follow in the footsteps of the colonel, and the detective, being on the watch for such a thing, would not have any difficulty in "spotting" the spy.

But the scheme was a failure, although Captain Pat adopted all possible precautions to make it a success.

He was careful not to leave the office until the Southerner had been gone fully five minutes, so as to allow ample time for the watcher to begin his trailing process.

Then the detective took a car up Broadway, acting on the idea that from the concealment afforded by the car he would be able to detect any spy following on the track of the veteran,

without exposing himself to the risk of being seen, for being so well known the chances were great that if the tracker got his eyes on him he would suspect what game he was up to.

But no suspicious character could Captain Pat discover lurking in the rear of the Southerner.

And after passing the colonel the detective left the car, and getting on the other side of the street, retraced his steps until the veteran passed.

Then, a half a block in the rear he followed Colonel Jackson, and when the Southerner got back to Twenty-third street and took a car there for down-town, the detective followed on the next, which was only a couple of minutes behind.

Still no results though.

At the hotel the two held a brief conference. "Did you notice the man this time?" Captain Pat asked.

"No, I did not."

"I don't think he could have discovered our game, although he might have suspected that something of the sort would be tried, and so hauled off."

"I will keep my eyes open, and as I will be certain to know the fellow if I ever see him again, I will notify you if he comes in sight."

"All right, and in the mean time I will find out all I can about the actress."

"There must be some of the performers in the troupe who know something about her, and I will make it my business to pump them dry."

And then Captain McGowen took his departure.

The colonel had a pleasant room on the second floor of the hotel, with a window looking into the interior court.

After the withdrawal of the detective the colonel went up to his room, and hardly had he got fairly seated in the apartment when a servant came with a message that a gentleman would like to speak with him.

The veteran was not a man inclined to stand upon ceremony, so without taking the trouble to ask who his visitor was or why he had not sent up his name, he told the servant to show him up.

The gentleman soon made his appearance—a medium-sized, rather oldish man, with short, iron-gray hair and a mustache and imperial of the same hue.

He was plainly, in fact poorly dressed, for his clothes betrayed evidence of long wear, but he had a shrewd, intelligent face, with something of a foreign look.

No common man evidently, but one who had seen better days.

He bowed politely to the colonel as he entered the room.

"This is Colonel Jackson, I believe?" he said, interrogatively.

"Yes, sir, that is my name."

"Well, colonel, although I am an entire stranger, yet I have ventured to call upon you in regard to a little matter of business."

"You are quite welcome, sir; take a chair," replied the veteran, in the hearty Southern style.

The stranger complied with the request, first taking care to close the door carefully, as though he was about to speak of important matters and feared lest the conversation might be overheard.

"I was one of the audience in the Bijou Opera House last night," he remarked, "and so happened to witness the little scene which occurred there."

The veteran merely nodded; he was uncertain in regard to what the man intended to say, and so was not going to commit himself.

"I have been thinking over the matter," the man continued, "and I thought I would come and see you about it to-day."

"I beg your pardon," remarked the colonel, "but I do not exactly understand how the matter can concern you in any way."

"Well, the only thing was that I thought I recognized the lady."

"Yes?"

Again the veteran was inclined to be non-committal.

"Although she bears a different name now, yet I think I knew her some twenty years ago in New Orleans."

The Southerner could not suppress his surprise, for this announcement was entirely unexpected, although he should have been in a measure prepared for it.

"In New Orleans, twenty years ago?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, if I am not greatly mistaken, but she was not an actress then; in fact, she was little more than a child, although appearing like a fully developed woman."

"She was boarding at a hotel where myself and wife put up during our stay in New Orleans, which was only a brief one. She and my wife became very well acquainted, and after the theater was over, when I went home and told my wife about the matter, she said she would like very much to see her."

"But, as I explained to her, there was a doubt as to whether it was the same person or not, and so I thought I would call upon you, as you apparently recognized her."

"The lady's name at that time was Catherine—that is Catherine was her first name, but her last one neither myself nor wife is able to remember."

"She had a relative, by the way, who was connected with the hotel in some capacity, a father or a brother, but on this point our memory is faulty."

Colonel Jackson was amazed by this disclosure, for he saw how valuable the evidence of this couple would be in the matter.

Since the woman had chosen to defy him, why then had she no right to complain if he decided to fight her with her own weapons?

She had chosen the game and she had only herself to blame if her challenge was accepted.

"You understood that I claimed the lady as my wife?" the veteran said.

"Oh, yes; I told my wife all about it, and she said I had better come and see you, for perhaps our evidence in regard to the matter might be valuable."

At this remark the colonel came to the conclusion that he understood how the land lay.

This worthy couple had scented that there was likely to be money in the affair and they were anxious to get some of it.

But that they could really give valuable evidence in regard to the matter was plain, for the mention of the woman's name and the giving of the particulars in regard to her dwelling in the hotel was proof positive that the man knew what he was talking about.

"No doubt your evidence in regard to the identity of this actress with the girl who lived in New Orleans twenty-odd years ago and who was called Catherine Raymond would be of much importance," the Southerner remarked.

"I wish you would come and see my wife, for she would be able to tell you a great deal about Miss Catherine, as she was very intimate with her during the time she stayed in New Orleans."

"Certainly, I will be pleased to do so," replied Colonel Jackson, immediately, for the idea seemed to be an excellent one to him, for he had no doubt that the woman would be able to give conclusive testimony.

"One thing, colonel, I would request," said the stranger, dropping his voice and evincing a slight nervousness, "and that is that you will keep this matter strictly secret."

"I am a poor man, while this actress is rich and possibly unscrupulous. If it should come to her knowledge that I am taking any steps which might injure her, it is possible it would cost me dearly; so I hope you will not think I am asking too much when I request you not to mention this matter to a living soul."

The impulsive Southerner readily gave the promise, and then it was arranged that on the next evening the stranger would come and conduct the colonel to the lady.

The interview could not take place that evening, on account of the absence of his wife the man explained.

The colonel kept his word and did not speak of the arrangement even to the detective-officer, Captain Pat McGowen, which was a decidedly foolish agreement.

Prompt to his appointment the stranger came in a cab. The pair were driven rapidly to the foot of Grand street, where they alighted and took a ferry-boat which conveyed them to Brooklyn, the Eastern District as it is called now, old-time Williamsburg, and there they immediately took another ferry-boat which brought them back to the city, landing them at Roosevelt street.

Here they boarded one of the "Belt" line of cars which transported them to the Twenty-third street ferry on the East River.

Another boat was taken at this point and the pair crossed to the part of the city of Brooklyn which is locally known as Greenpoint.

The explanation which the stranger gave in regard to this extremely roundabout way of getting at their objective point was reasonable.

"I think we are being followed," he confided to his companion immediately after getting into the cab.

"I noticed a private detective at the door and another one in a cab outside as we came out. It would be just like this desperate and unscrupulous woman to put a watch upon you."

To this the unsuspecting veteran readily assented, and as he was almost a total stranger to the city, when he was finally transported to Greenpoint he had not the slightest idea of where he was.

These maneuvers had taken time, and it was close to eleven o'clock when the pair walked through the almost-deserted street of this obscure locality, close to the river-side, whither the stranger had conducted the veteran.

Stopping at the door of a small, wooden house, which was only a short distance from the water's edge, the stranger opened it with a latch-key and bade the veteran follow him.

"Come straight ahead—there's nothing in the way!"

The colonel followed his guide through the darkness, no thought of possible danger in his mind.

The entry was a long one, and just as the Southerner had come to the conclusion that he

must be near the end, the floor suddenly gave way beneath him.

Too late he realized that he was entrapped.

CHAPTER XIV.

A FIENDISH WORK.

THE entry was as dark as a pocket; the Southern colonel was unable to see a foot before him, and so totally unsuspecting of danger was he that until he felt the floor give way beneath him, he had the most utter confidence in his guide.

But the moment the trap was sprung the truth was immediately revealed to him.

Although a veteran of the civil war, the hero of a hundred fights, he was no match for the desperate schemer who had contrived the trap. There was not a doubt in his mind in regard to who had ensnared him.

He had not made any mistake in regard to the woman—he had not been deceived by any strange resemblance.

Miss Diana Duclois, as she was now pleased to call herself, the pretended English burlesque actress, was his runaway wife, and fully as desperate now as in the old days when she had not hesitated to strike at his very life.

Again, without any reluctance or pangs of remorse, she had attempted to remove from her path the man who apparently stood in her way.

No wonder that the stranger was in possession of the information in regard to her early life, since he had undoubtedly come directly from her.

Too late Colonel John Andy Jackson realized that when he attempted to run counter to the ideas of the adventuress he had entered upon a life and death struggle.

In moments of peril like this the brain works quickly, and all these ideas flashed through the mind of the veteran as he was falling through the trap-door which had so unexpectedly opened beneath his feet.

Involuntarily as he felt the floor give way beneath him the colonel thrust out his arms, endeavoring to clasp the edges of the trap so as to avoid the fall into the space below.

But the colonel was too heavy a man and not trained athlete enough to accomplish this feat, and down—he went.

Finding that there was no escaping the fall, the veteran braced himself to meet the shock which was sure to come when he came in contact with the earth.

Thanks to his early training, which had led him to become proficient in all sorts of active, manly games, he was able to accomplish this, although the pit into which he fell was no small one, being fully ten feet deep, and a ten-foot fall was no joke to so heavy a man as the Southern colonel, and one well in years too.

The shock knocked the wind out of him, and it was fully five minutes before he recovered breath enough to speak.

He had landed squarely upon his feet, but the violence of the shock had toppled him over sideways.

And when he rose to a sitting posture and made the discovery that he had not sustained any material damage by the fall an exclamation of satisfaction escaped from him.

"Come, come, it isn't so bad after all," he muttered.

"I am entrapped fast enough, there isn't the least doubt about that, and I walked into the snare with as little suspicion as a five-year-old child; but now that they have got me, perhaps I may turn out to be a sort of a white elephant; possibly they will discover, before they get through with this picnic, that they have caught a Tartar."

Grimly the words came from the mouth of the old soldier, and as he spoke he drew the seven-shooter which he always carried and clicked the cylinder around so as to be sure that the tool was in good working order.

"I might be in a far worse trap than this," he continued.

"As it is, I am in full possession of my senses and physical powers, and well-armed, too, therefore able to offer a desperate resistance to any attack."

But as the old soldier chuckled to himself over the prospect, a sudden idea occurred to him which rather put a damper upon his merriment.

"By Jove! I never thought of that before," he muttered, as the idea flashed into his head.

"Perhaps it isn't the game to attack me. Perhaps, now that they have me shut up in this pit, the intention is to leave me hyer to starve to death."

"But they cannot work that, though!" the veteran cried, abruptly, "for there's nothing to prevent me from giving an alarm, and surely there must be some one in the neighborhood who will hear my outcries."

"I don't suppose there will be any use of my yelling to-night, though, for it is so late that every one will be asleep, but when the daylight comes, though, there must be plenty of people in the neighborhood: so I'll just make myself as comfortable as I can until morning, and then, unless I am disturbed before, I will try my best to get out of this scrape."

As the reader will observe the Southern colonel was disposed to take the matter easy, as an old soldier should.

Leaving him to his meditations, we will return to the treacherous guide who had conducted the veteran into the snare.

Being eight or nine feet in advance of the colonel, when he had directed him to come straight on, it had been an easy matter for the schemer to pass over the trap-door, then securely fastened by bolts underneath, and reach the spring by means of which the trap was operated, which was situated at the end of the entry.

And the trap-door was so arranged with springs that after the colonel passed through it it returned to its place again and became perfectly solid.

When the false guide heard the click of the door-springs as the trap sprung back to its place, and so knew that his prey was securely caged, he opened a door in the entry by the side of which he was standing.

The door led into a room whose only furniture consisted of an old barrel, upon which a candle burned, and a couple of soap-boxes which were placed on end, evidently for the purpose of answering for chairs.

Within the room was a short, thick-set, elderly man, with a round red face fringed by a bushy red beard, his form stretched out at full length.

The man's face plainly betrayed that he was of dissipated habits, and the suit of clothes which he wore was so shabby that he was quite tramp-like in his appearance.

"Well, you have come at last," the man said, evidently out of sorts, waking when the other shook him.

"Yes, at last; you have been on a spree again, I see."

"So help me Bob! I only had a pint of gin, and what is a pint of gin to a man with a swallow like mine."

"Not much, that is a fact."

"But, I say, have you got all the articles?"

"Yes, there's a gallon of coal-oil in the closet there, and these boxes are filled with cotton-wool."

"Open them and take the cotton out."

"All right."

The cotton-wool was done up in rolls, technically called cotton batting, such as is used for lining comforters and bed-quilts with.

Acting on the directions of the master-spirit—whom the reader by this time has probably guessed was the man who had sought the burlesque queen's assistance, and whom we will call Claudius Eberhard, to give him the name which he claimed, whether it was his or not—the tramp-like fellow, who answered to the appellation of Thomas Clendenning, unrolled the cotton-wool and spread it out on the floor, and then bringing the oil-can from the closet—the can was carefully wrapped in paper in such a manner that no one would have been apt to suspect what it was—proceeded to saturate the cotton with the oil.

"What are you up to 'ere, anyway?" asked Clendenning, after the job was completed.

"Going to have a little fireworks fun, eh?"

"Yes, that is about the idea."

"But you will be apt to set the blooming shanty on fire, you know."

"That is what I am after."

"What for?"

"Don't ask questions."

"Some wrong in it, I presume."

"Oh, yes, or else I shouldn't bother with it. You may be sure of that."

"It's a plant to do the insurance blokes, eh?"

"I suppose so; but that isn't my business, you know. I never ask any questions in a matter of this kind. All I want to know is, how difficult is the job and how much money is the party willing to pay for it."

"Well, may I be hanged if I can see how anybody is going to make money by setting fire to a miserable old hovel like this. The insurance chap who was donkey enough to take such a risk as this must have been drunk when he did it."

"That is none of our business," the other replied.

"All we have to do with the matter is to work the trick as neatly as possible, and then get out, so, come along!"

In all his calculations the old soldier had never even dreamed that a peril of this sort might threaten him.

Once the house was in flames a fiery tomb awaited him, for from such a danger there was no escape.

CHAPTER XV.

JUDGE BILLY SCHEMES.

JUDGE BILLY GOODFELLOW was not the kind of man to allow the grass to grow under his feet in a matter of this kind, and on the very next morning that succeeded the night when the detective had so opportunely come to his assistance and rescued him from the power of the roughs, he made his appearance at the Bijou Opera House.

He was personally acquainted with the manager, for Colonel Joe Richmond had made it his business when he embarked in theatrical speculations in New York, to become acquainted with all the prominent men whose good will would be apt to be valuable to him.

And therefore Judge Billy was one of the first men whose acquaintance he made when he took control of the cosey Broadway Opera House.

The judge was not only of the most persistent theater-goers of Gotham, but he had the rare merit, in a politician, of always insisting upon paying his way.

He despised the "dead-head" system as far as theaters were concerned, although he accepted railroad passes without question.

But it was a favorite boast of his that whenever he was to be seen in the front of a theater, his presence represented so much money in the treasury.

"I don't mind riding free on the railroads," he was wont to remark, "because you can bet all you're worth that the railroad sharps calculate to get the value of my pass out of me in some way."

"But when it comes to the theater that is a different matter altogether."

"I can't do the theater any good except by recommending my friends to go if the show is a good one, and as I always make a point of giving such advice as that on the square, I pay my way every time and then I feel free to say what I like."

The good-will of such a man as this, who always came accompanied by a host of friends, all of whom paid for their admission, was well worth having, and so, whenever the judge made his appearance at any of the theaters by day or night, he was always welcomed right heartily.

On the present occasion the manager happened to be standing in front of the theater, and when the politician approached greeted him cordially.

The cash-box of the Opera House had been twenty-five dollars richer on the past night by reason of Judge Billy's presence in the auditorium, and therefore it was natural that the manager should be delighted at the chance of shaking hands with him.

"You were in front last night, I believe," Colonel Richmond remarked.

"Oh, yes, I took the show in," responded the politician, who was never particularly dignified.

"I hope you liked it."

"It was 'way up," the other assented with a potential nod of his massive head.

"It is the best thing I have seen for some time. I tell you what it is, colonel, it seems to me that you will make a barrel of money out of it."

"Well, I think myself that there is considerable money in the thing, although the expenses are heavy, and I have to share with the troupe, who of course take the lion's part."

"By the by, I want that box I had last night for every night this week."

The manager looked surprised, for liberal as was Judge Billy about such matters, this was a wholesale order even from him.

"For every night this week?" queried the manager, thinking it might be possible he misunderstood the order.

"Yes; I'm just dead gone on this show!" the politician asserted. "Have your man yonder"—and he nodded to the gentleman in the box-office—"figure up the amount of the damage and I will give you a check for it."

This proceeding was immediately gone through, but when the box-office-keeper was about to hand out the tickets the judge waved them back.

"No, no, I don't want to bother to lug them around. Can't you keep them for me so I can have them at night when I arrive with my gang?"

"Certainly!" Colonel Richmond hastened to exclaim. "Glad to accommodate you in any way."

"By the way, I'm just going over to have a little breakfast; I'm a late bird this morning. Will you join me?"

"I should be delighted, only I don't think I could eat anything, for I was late myself this morning and only came from breakfast an hour or so ago."

"Oh, come along! You can get rid of a few oysters, anyway, and we'll have a bottle of white wine to wash them down."

To be able to boast of having breakfasted with one of the greatest of the local politicians was an inducement not to be despised by a man who in his capacity of theatrical manager was straining every nerve to make himself and the Opera House over which he presided popular, and so Colonel Richmond accepted the invitation.

The judge conducted the other to the restaurant which is commonly supposed to be a head and shoulders above all the rest of the class in the city, and in a short time an elaborate breakfast was spread before the door, flanked by a couple of bottles of wine which represented the rarest vintage in the cellar.

Despite his assertion that he did not think he would be able to eat anything, Colonel Richmond managed to do ample justice to the fare, and disposed of fully his share of the sparkling wine.

The conversation, which touched at first upon the various topics of the day, soon came to the subject of the English burlesque troupe, which

had achieved such a prodigious success on the preceding evening at Colonel Richmond's theater.

"The finest show of the kind that I ever saw in my life!" the politician declared.

"Yes, I think myself it goes ahead of anything that we have had in this country."

"Or in any other either!" Judge Billy asserted.

"I went over to Europe last year—did the whole thing, you know, saw everything worth seeing, and I tell you there wasn't anything there that came up to Miss Duclois and her troupe."

"Well, I'm glad to have your opinion, for I know you are a judge in such matters."

"In fact, I don't know of a man in the country who is any better posted in regard to amusements than yourself."

"Egad! I don't believe there is!"

"Oh, I tell you, colonel, you have got a fortune in your grasp."

"I hope so—and, in fact, I don't think there is any doubt about it; still, public taste in amusement matters is so capricious that it is hard to tell sometimes what will please and what will not."

"By the way, that Miss Diana is a beautiful girl. I shouldn't mind making her acquaintance," the judge remarked, in a careless sort of way as if the idea had just come up in his mind.

But Colonel Joe Richmond was nobody's fool, and the moment the judge spoke he fancied he knew why his presence had been desired by the politician.

Still as this sort of thing he considered to be perfectly fair he had no objections to its being tried on him.

"I do not think there will be any difficulty in regard to that," the manager said.

"There isn't the least doubt that I can arrange the matter. I will have to consult the lady, but when I represent to her what kind of a gentleman you are, there isn't the slightest doubt she will be glad to make your acquaintance."

"She will not lose anything by knowing me," the judge remarked, meaningly.

"But I say, how do you arrange the matter—take me behind the scene to the green-room, as you call it, and introduce me there?"

"Oh, no, my dear judge, that kind of business—the green-room introductions, and all that sort of thing, is entirely out of date, away behind the present age, you know, back in the dust of the past, in fact it never got a foothold in this country, but is an English idea entirely."

"In an American theater we don't allow anybody behind the scenes except on very rare occasions, and if I were to try and oblige you in this matter the chances are that Miss Duclois would kick like a mule."

"How can the business be arranged then?"

"As easy as rolling off a log," the manager replied.

"The lady is in my private office in front of the theater almost every day from twelve to one, and there isn't anything to prevent you from making a friendly call upon me just about that time, then an introduction would be perfectly in order."

"I must give you a warning though, judge. Miss Duclois's business manager, Manwaring, is said to be sweet on the lady, and you may have to encounter his opposition."

"Oh, I am not particularly infatuated with Miss Diana herself," the judge replied, carelessly. "That little girl, Edmonds, who plays the fairy queen, would suit me as well."

"In that case then it will undoubtedly be plain sailing," was the manager's assurance. "And when you are acquainted with Miss Duclois it will be easy enough to get an introduction to the lesser light."

CHAPTER XVI.

ANOTHER PERIL.

THAT night Judge Billy occupied his box, and with him were a party of friends who were all well-known men-about-town.

When the burlesque queen appeared, the judge with his own hand tossed her a bouquet which, although about half the size of the usual floral compliment, was composed of the most expensive flowers, and in addition had attached to it a little box, which caused the smile with which Miss Diana greeted the offering to be an extremely sweet one.

Her quick eyes had noticed the little box, and she immediately guessed that it contained some article of jewelry which would be far more acceptable than the empty compliment of the flowers.

As soon as she quitted the stage she hastened to examine the box.

As she had expected, it contained a ring, but as she had not expected it was a diamond, and the practical Slippery Archy, who happened to be present when the trinket came to light, immediately declared that it was worth a good fifty dollars of any one's money.

"Quite a conquest," the actress remarked with a self-satisfied air as she slipped the ring upon her finger and gazed at it admiringly.

"Oh, yes, and do you know I am not a bit jealous?" the wily Jew speculator remarked with a grin.

The burlesque queen rather wondered at this, for Slippery Archy as a rule did not admire any demonstrations of this kind.

The bouquets he did not object to, but when it came to throwing costly articles of jewelry to his star it was apt to make him ill-tempered.

And the idea that on this occasion he should not only announce that he wasn't jealous, but actually grin in her face as though he thought the matter was a good joke was astonishing.

"Well, I am glad you are not jealous, for that gives me a chance to smile at the gentleman without being taken to task by you in regard to the matter."

"Oh, smile at him all you like, I'm agreeable," Slippery Archy replied in the most matter-of-fact way in the world.

"In fact, I am so indifferent about the matter that I have promised if the gentleman makes his appearance in front of the theater to-morrow anywhere from twelve to one to give you an introduction to him."

"You have?" And both the voice and the look of the burlesque queen showed that she did not understand the affair at all.

"Oh, yes, so you can see that I am not at all jealous. He is a first-class man, one of the big nob of the city—a leading politician, just rolling in wealth and possessed of more influence than almost any other man you could name."

"A very useful friend to have, indeed," remarked the burlesque actress, laying perceptible stress upon the word "friend," whereupon the wily speculator only grinned the more.

"What is the matter with you?" demanded Diana, a tinge of anger in her voice, for she had not failed to notice this, to her, unseemly merriment.

"What are you grinning like a chessy cat for? I do not see anything laughable in the matter."

"No, of course not, and that is where the joke comes in."

"There's no joke in the matter at all," the burlesque queen exclaimed, a touch of indignation in her tones.

"Oh, yes, there is, and you will comprehend when I explain the affair to you."

"You see, you are on the wrong tack; you have got the idea in your head that this gentleman has been fascinated by your charms, but you never made a bigger mistake in your life."

"This man is an out and outer; a first-chop gentleman, and no mistake, and you are not the game he is after."

"Indeed?"

"Oh, it is a fact, as you will soon see. He has made you a present so as to get in your good graces."

"A trifle of fifty or sixty dollars is nothing to a man of his kind. You have got to come to the thousands to make him stop to consider."

"Such a man is worth knowing," and there was a hidden meaning in the speech which the shrewd-witted speculator did not fail to immediately see.

"No, no, that game will not work, there is not the least chance for you."

"In your troupe is metal more attractive."

And the speculator smiled maliciously as he made the announcement.

"Oh, then there is some one whom he admires more than he does me?"

"Yes, and the present to you is an ingenious way of getting you to look with a favorable eye upon his suit."

"How little do you so-called shrewd men understand women!" exclaimed the burlesque queen, her lip curling in contempt.

"This ingenious device, as you term it, would be just about the surest way to make a woman like myself do all in her power to interfere with the cunning scheme."

"It is no way for a man to win a woman's friendship to lead her to believe that he greatly admires her, and then suddenly allow her to discover that there is some one else whom he admires more, and that he has only been using her as a cat's paw."

The speculator was immediately struck with the truth of this observation, and admitted as much.

"But if I am not the bright, particular queen of his heart," remarked Diana, with a slight touch of sarcasm, "who is?"

"You will never guess."

"I suppose not, for out of the thirty good-looking girls who adorn our stage it would be difficult to pick the one charmer who appears to this party to be far superior to the rest, your humble servant included."

"It is the new girl."

"What, this little pale-faced chit?"

"Edmonds—yes."

"Well, I am astonished."

"She is the one."

"I never should have guessed that it was her, for although she is a good-looking girl enough, yet there isn't the least bit of style about her."

"There are twenty girls on the stage all equally good-looking and decidedly more dashing and brilliant."

"She is the girl for all that."

And then a sudden idea flashed upon the mind of the burlesque queen.

"I told this girl when I engaged her that I had a presentiment that she would work me ill some day," she exclaimed, abruptly.

"Well, it isn't her fault; she is innocent. If the fellow chooses to fall in love with her she surely is not to blame."

"No, I presume not, but she interferes with me all the same though."

"Nonsense! you don't care for the man, and what are his trumpery presents to a woman like yourself making hundreds of dollars?" the speculator urged.

"Yes, that is true enough, but it is not flattering to my vanity to be eclipsed by this chit of a girl."

"You have me, you know, my adoration to sustain you."

Miss Diana "made a face" at him, as much as to imply that she did not value his affection very highly.

"This gentleman is one of the most influential men in New York," the speculator explained. "One of the leaders in whose wake a crowd is continually following, and it is always well to be on friendly terms with such a man."

"To give you an idea of the way he does business, he has taken his box for every night this week, and if everything goes on all right the chances are that he will keep it right through our engagement, for he has been known to do such a thing."

"He is fascinated by this Edmonds girl, and is anxious to secure an introduction to her."

"Colonel Richmond and he are great friends, and the colonel promised to introduce him to you, provided you hadn't any objection, and through you he hopes to become acquainted with his charmer."

The burlesque queen reflected for a moment and then said:

"Well, I suppose I ought not to stand in the girl's way, for she evidently needs friends badly enough, and the acquaintanceship may be of use to her."

Just then there was a burst of applause from the audience, which directed the eyes of the burlesque queen and her manager to the stage.

Philippa, as the fairy queen, had just made her appearance, and her coming upon the stage was signalized by three stupendous floral ornaments being handed over the footlights by the ushers, to whom in accordance with the rule of the Opera House all such trophies were intrusted.

No commonplace bouquets were these, but most elaborate specimens of the florist's art.

There was a ship, a mammoth horseshoe and a harp fully three feet high.

No wonder the audience applauded, and the rest of the actresses almost turned green with envy when they beheld these magnificent gifts bestowed upon the blushing fairy queen, who was so bewildered by the unexpected compliment that she hardly knew what to do.

But her new-made friend, cool, clear-headed Blanche Cunningham, was, luckily, at her elbow.

"Smile, courtesy your thanks, then carry the flowers to the wing and go on with your part!" counseled Blanche, in the ear of the confused Philippa.

Recovering her presence of mind almost immediately, she obeyed the injunction, then, when she returned to her position, a small bouquet, similar to the one which had been bestowed upon Miss Diana, fell at her feet.

A little box was also attached to this one.

Again there was a burst of applause from the audience, for the girl had made a most favorable impression, and many in the front of the house had "caught on" to the box.

As this trophy was a small one, Philippa retained it in her hand, sung the verses allotted to her and then entered her car for her cloudward flight, the finale of the act.

Up in the air she rose, and when she was some ten feet above the stage, happening to look upward, she saw a sight which chilled her blood with horror.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ASSASSIN AGAIN.

In order that the reader may fully understand the nature of the peril which threatened the girl it will be necessary to explain the peculiar position in which she was placed.

As the fairy queen she was supposed to journey through the air with the greatest of ease, just as the ordinary mortal traverses the land.

And in order to carry out the illusion the fairy queen was provided with what, in the technical language of the stage, is called a "car."

In this case the car consisted of a stout frame-work of boards about two feet square; at the back of the platform an iron rod was firmly bolted, about as big round as a man's finger, and ending in a ring at the top large enough to encircle a woman's waist.

The ring was so arranged that it opened and closed with a stout spring.

To each of the four corners of the platform an almost invisible yet stout wire cord was attached, and these came together some ten feet from the stage in a single rope.

The platform and the iron ring were conceal-

ed by garlands of flowers amid which the fairy-queen took her place when she prepared for a skyward flight.

Standing on the platform she clasped the iron ring about her waist, and being thus protected from the possibility of falling from the platform, the flight into the air could be made without much risk of accident.

When a skillful and experienced stage mechanic has charge of such a contrivance as this the risk of anything going wrong so as to endanger the life or limb of the performer who is obliged to make the ascent is extremely small.

In this case the mechanic in charge of the stage of the Bijou Opera House was known to be one of the most careful men in the business, and though he had "gotten up" a great number of "show pieces"—as the plays are called which depend more on the scenery, mechanical effects and costumes than on the performers—yet it was his boast that no accident putting anybody in peril had ever occurred.

At the rehearsals and on the first night the contrivance had operated as smoothly as clock-work, and although Philippa was not a particularly stout-hearted girl, yet she did not feel the least fear about rising to the "fly borders," as the upper curtains which fringe the stage are called.

But on this occasion, happening to cast her eyes upward, she beheld a sight which nearly made her faint with fright, but it was no defect in the machinery of the car which so filled her soul with horror.

No human devilry was at work to undo what human ingenuity had planned.

The single-wire rope which supported the car ran through a pulley in the "rigging loft" right over the center of the stage, and then was carried by means of another pulley to the platform in the flies where all the work of raising and lowering the curtain and adjusting the upper draperies of the stage is carried on.

The "rigging loft" is a skeleton frame suspended over the stage, just under the roof of the theater, and all the ropes necessary to the working of the stage passed through pulleys fastened to it.

On the fly platform the wire rope which controlled the movements of the car was made fast to a windlass, and the car with its burden of the fairy queen was able to rise smoothly through the air.

And now that we have described the car and its machinery, so the reader will be able to understand exactly how the girl was placed, we will proceed to relate what it was that threw her into such an agony of terror.

In the rigging-loft of a theater no one goes except the mechanics of the establishment, and they only on rare intervals when it becomes necessary to alter the position of some standing ropes or to arrange new ones.

But when the young actress happened to look upward her eyes fell upon the figure of a man in the rigging-loft.

His face she saw distinctly peering down at her—the face of the assassin who had threatened her with death in the lodging-house.

At first she fancied that it was a delusion, and she closed her eyes thinking that in her excited state her imagination was running riot.

But when she gazed again the man was still there.

It was no delusion but reality.

And then she suddenly became conscious that the man comprehended that she saw him.

The look upon his face became more fiend-like than ever, and then she saw the blade of a knife flash in the air, and a comprehension of what he intended to do flashed suddenly upon her.

He intended to cut the rope which fastened the pulley to the rigging-loft, and the moment this rope was severed the car and its contents would be hurled headlong to the stage.

Was it a wonder that the girl fainted, as she did almost immediately after coming to a knowledge of these facts?

The car was rapidly approaching the "sky borders," as the strips of painted canvas which overhang the stage to represent the heavens are called.

It was fully fifteen feet from the stage.

The closing chorus of the act was pealing forth, the curtain-bell had rung, and the act-dron was half-way down, the audience in front applauding vigorously when, without a moment's warning, the car containing the fairy queen came rushing to the stage.

The fall of the car came immediately after Philippa sunk into insensibility, and although all the performers on the stage, who had their attention directed to the girl at the moment, noticed that she had fainted and that the iron band around her waist kept her from falling, yet they had no time to call attention to the fact before the car came crashing down.

Fully one-half of the audience witnessed the accident, although the act-drop touched the stage a moment after, and there was a wild commotion in the front of the house.

Judge Billy was always equal to all occasions of this sort.

With a bound he was on his feet and leaning out of his box.

"A doctor—for the love of Heaven, a doc-

tor!" he cried. "The girl may be mortally hurt!"

As it happened, two of the most eminent physicians in the city were seated in the front row of the orchestra side by side, and they promptly answered the call, climbing over the footlights to the stage amid the tumultuous applause of the audience.

A fall of fully fifteen feet under such conditions is generally apt to be a pretty serious thing, but it seemed as if there was some good angel watching over the girl, for she escaped without a scratch, although well shaken up by the shock.

But her senseless condition at first excited great alarm, for it was feared that the shock had proved fatal.

Under the care of the physicians she soon recovered the use of her senses, however.

Colonel Richmond in person happened to be on the stage and personally superintended the affair.

"Thank Heaven that she is not killed!" he exclaimed, when Philippa opened her eyes and in response to the anxious inquiries of the doctors, said that, as far as she knew, she had escaped without serious injury, for she did not feel any pain.

"Pretty serious accident, Mike," the manager observed to the boss stage-carpenter, who had hurried to the scene as soon as possible and proceeded to examine the machinery.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but it wasn't any accident at all," responded the bluff and burly stage-carpenter.

"Not an accident!" cried the manager, in astonishment, and the others repeated the exclamation.

"No, sir, no accident at all."

"The machinery is all right and capable of holding ten times the weight it had to carry."

"There has been foul play in the matter."

"Foul play!" cried a score of excited people.

"Yes, it was the fastenings of the pulley through which the wire rope ran that gave way."

"The rope itself is all right, you can see!"

And the mechanic held it up for inspection.

There was no mistaking the truth of the statement, and then he called attention to the severed rope which had held the pulley in its place.

"You can see, all of you, that the rope has been cut—it never parted under the weight, but was cut with a knife nearly through and then it broke."

This was apparent to all.

"Yes, that dreadful man attempted to kill me," murmured Philippa, faintly.

"Send for Captain McGowen; he knows all about it."

Here was a mystery indeed.

Colonel Richmond was prompt to act.

"Put a watch at the back door and see that no one leaves the theater."

"Captain McGowen is in the front of the house, luckily. Jimmy, go for him instantly!"

This to the call-boy.

Philippa was assisted to her dressing-room, and as she said she felt well enough to go on, preparations for the resumption of the performance were begun.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SEARCH.

COLONEL RICHMOND'S first movement after he discovered that the girl was not seriously injured, and that it would not be necessary to put any one on in her place, was to have the stage-manager go in front of the curtain and make an announcement to that effect.

Then the doctors after administering some stimulants to the young actress, resumed their seats in the front of the house.

Captain McGowen was quickly on hand, and being conducted to the dressing-room of the young actress by the manager was soon in possession of all the facts in the case.

Colonel Richmond was astonished at the strange story.

"It is one of the oddest things that has ever come to my knowledge!" he declared.

"And you really haven't any idea why this man should wish to do you harm?" he inquired of Philippa.

"No, sir."

"Very strange—very strange, indeed!"

And the manager shook his head, sagely.

"And how the deuce the fellow managed to gain admission into this place is a mystery."

"It is usually a pretty difficult matter for any one to gain admission to the stage department of a well-regulated theater, and I don't see how the fellow managed it, unless, indeed, he is one of our regular hands, and that does not seem to be possible."

"And we haven't any new hands either," said the stage-manager, who was at the elbow of the colonel.

"Only our old regular hands."

"Luckily I gave orders not to allow any one to leave the building, so you will be able to nab the fellow without much doubt, for he must be in the place somewhere," Colonel Richmond observed, rubbing his hands gleefully together.

The detective shook his head; he did not feel so sure in regard to this matter.

From his experience with the stage doors of theaters he knew that though it is generally a difficult matter to get in, it is always easy enough to get out.

And then, when the old man who attended to the door was questioned, he admitted that at the end of the act, attracted by the news that there had been an accident on the stage, he had left his post for a few minutes, so that he might learn the particulars, and that during that time it would have been an easy matter for any one to pass out without his knowledge.

But in regard to any stranger getting into the place he felt certain no one could pass him without his knowing it.

"Although, now that I come to think of it, a strange thing happened to-night," said the old man.

"There's two 'flymen,' you know," he said, addressing his conversation to the manager, "Jim and Bill. They generally come in together, and I thought they did to-night; but they passed me at the time when I was having a row with an old cuss, who didn't look much better than a tramp, who insisted upon going in for to see you, sir," this to the manager.

"I was disputing with the man and trying to get him out without having any trouble—he was in liquor and inclined to be ugly, so I didn't notice the boys as particularly as I might."

"But I am sure that Jim passed me, and I thought Bill was with him, but about half an hour after Bill came in."

"I was kinder staggered at it, thinking he was in the house, and I axed him how he managed to get out, as I hadn't noticed him pass."

"And he up and allowed he hadn't been in at all."

"Of course I was mistaken about his being with Jim, 'cos when I asked Jim about it he said he came in alone, and that is all out of the way that happened to-night as far as I knows on."

This statement was quite enough to suggest to a shrewd detective—as Pat McGowen undoubtedly was—how the trick had been worked.

"I want a chance to take a look at these two flymen without letting them know what lay I am on," he said privately to the manager.

"Certainly," Colonel Richmond replied, "they are up-stairs in the flies, and it is not likely that they know about your being summoned."

Then up-stairs to the fly platform the manager conducted the detective, just as if he was some stranger to whom he was showing the theater.

As Captain Pat had expected, there was a decided resemblance between Bill, the flyman, and the unknown assassin, so the means by which the man obtained entrance to the theater was plain.

And to the acute detective it was evident that flyman Jim knew something of the matter, for he seemed decidedly nervous, and watched the detective as though he suspected his business.

After taking a careful look around, Captain Pat turned to the two flymen who were standing by the curtain windlass in readiness for the signal bell, and said abruptly:

"By the way, how did that fellow get down from the rigging loft?"

Both of the men stared, but the experienced detective fancied that while Bill's astonishment was real, the other was only shamming.

The flymen denied all knowledge of the man, and the detective contented himself with the significant remark that it was lucky that neither one of them had anything to do with the matter, because the fellow had attempted to commit murder, and the man who had aided him to enter the theater would be certain to find himself in jail as an accomplice if he were discovered.

Then the two went down-stairs again.

A most thorough search was made, but no trace of the rascal could be found.

"He took advantage of the doorkeeper's absence from the door to skip out," was the detective's comment.

"What is the next move?" asked the manager.

"Well, I will have to think the matter over before I can decide in regard to that," Captain Pat answered.

"But I will go right ahead and do the best I can."

And then he departed.

But although he had decided upon a plan of action, he did not think it wise to make it public.

Instead of returning to the auditorium of the theater, he hunted up a police magistrate and swore out a warrant.

And with this warrant, in company with one of his detectives and a hack, he took up a position on the side street just above the Bijou Opera House.

He had ascertained that the man whom he was after usually proceeded up Broadway to his home after the performance.

Having put his associate and the hack in position, the detective took up his station in front

of the theater, watched the audience come out at the close of the performance, and then caught sight of his prey, who came from the stage door just as the last of the audience were leaving the theater.

He kept out of sight, so that the fellow had no suspicion that he was in the neighborhood, but followed close behind him when he walked up the street.

At the corner, in obedience to a signal from Captain Pat, the detective accosted the man.

"Is your name James Riland?"

"It is," replied the other.

"Then you are my prisoner," said the detective, producing his warrant.

"Prisoner! what do you mean?" cried the flyman, turning pale.

"You are wanted for murder!" exclaimed Captain Pat, abruptly, and almost before the man knew what the detective was about, he had dextrously snapped a pair of handcuffs upon his wrists.

And then in a very unceremonious manner the prisoner was hustled into the coach, which immediately drove off.

As there were plenty of people in the street, a crowd most certainly would have collected if Captain Pat had not acted so promptly in securing his prisoner.

The man was dumfounded by the suddenness of this unexpected blow.

Away went the coach, the detectives making themselves as comfortable as possible, but not attempting to enter into conversation with their prisoner.

For five minutes the man worried in silence over the matter, and then, suddenly, unable to bear the suspense longer, he said:

"See here, haven't you made some mistake in this thing? I haven't done anything."

"Tell that to the judge in the morning," replied Captain Pat.

"Where are you taking me?"

"To the Tombs," coolly responded the Green-coat Detective.

"The Tombs!" cried the prisoner, aghast at hearing the well-known name of New York's notorious prison.

"That is where you are bound."

"Great heavens! I tell you there is some big mistake in the matter. I ain't committed no murder."

"You were accessory to an attempted one, though, and if it isn't a hanging matter, yet it is a mighty ugly scrape for a man to get into," emphatically.

"If I was him I would make a clean breast of the thing, turn State's evidence and give the other fellow away before he gets a chance to try the same game," suggested the other detective, addressing his conversation to Captain Pat and speaking as though the idea had just occurred to him.

The man jumped eagerly at the idea.

"I'll do it—glad to do it, although it is mighty little I know of the matter."

"You see the fellow played me for a sucker from the beginning, and the joke of the thing is I took him for a flat too—a sort of a crank—and hadn't any idea that there was the least bit of harm in him."

And now the fellow had commenced he went on without urging.

The stranger had encountered him outside of the theater, and offered to give him twenty dollars if he could contrive to smuggle him into the theater and arrange so he could see the performance. By putting him up in the rigging-loft the flyman knew he would not be apt to be discovered.

Taking advantage of the tramp occupying the attention of the doorkeeper, he had got him into the theater, but he had not had the slightest suspicion of the game the man was up to until the master mechanic had announced that the pulley tackle had been cut.

Then he had looked for the stranger but could not find him.

With all his shrewdness Captain Pat had not succeeded in striking the trail.

After a pretended consultation with his companion McGowen announced that they had come to the conclusion not to press the charge if he, the prisoner, would agree to do his best to find the stranger, and to this the flyman gladly consented.

CHAPTER XIX.

A SKILLFUL PIECE OF DETECTIVE WORK.

THE trap into which the old soldier fell so easily was about as well-planned as any scheme of the kind could possibly be and, as the reader has seen, it succeeded to perfection.

True, the old-time captain of the Louisiana "Tigers" was an extremely simple and unsuspecting man for one who had lived in the world as long as he and seen as much of life.

But there was very little suspicion and distrust in his nature.

Being a big-hearted, generous man, who would never descend to any mean action himself, however much he might profit by it, he generally judged the rest of mankind by himself, and, no matter how much he was imposed upon never lost his trust in human nature.

Still, the plot was so deep a one that even a

shrewd man-of-the-world, used to the tricks and traps which abound in all large cities, most probably would have fallen a victim.

The main fear that the deviser and executor of the plot had was that a detective watch might have been put on the old soldier.

He had no reason to suspect that there was any such thing; but his busy brain conceived the idea that there might be, and in order to evade this watch—if there was one—all possible precautions were taken.

And the plotter was right in his surmise.

A watch had been put on the old man.

And this was Captain Pat McGowen's work.

When Colonel Jackson came to consult him, and made known to him the suspicion which he entertained that he had been followed, the acute detective immediately jumped to the conclusion that it was so, and then in his mind he went to work to get a theory upon which to act.

"If the old soldier is the husband of the burlesque actress his unexpected appearance at this time must be extremely annoying to her, particularly if he manifests any desire to make trouble for her.

"And his claim that she was his runaway wife, who had attempted his life years ago most certainly would be likely to be disagreeable if he persisted in the claim.

"It would be the most natural thing in the world for her to put a spy upon his track for the purpose of trying to discover what he intended to do; and the fact that I was not able to discover the spy, when I set about it, is not proof that there isn't a watch upon the man, for if the tracker is a fellow who understands his business he would be apt to scent danger when he discovered that the colonel had called upon me and so got out of the way.

"Then, if this woman is the desperate character that the old soldier's tale makes her out to be—a woman who did not hesitate to strike even at a life—if she finds that the colonel is likely to cause her any serious trouble, then, most certainly, she will be apt to attempt to retaliate on him in some way.

"So the conclusion is clear—if there is a spy upon Colonel Jackson, no one but this woman has any reason to put a tracker on the watch.

"And if she has done this, then there isn't the least doubt that she is the Catherine Raymond whom the colonel married in New Orleans twenty-odd years ago.

"My course of action then is clear. I must put a watch upon the colonel, and must manage the matter so carefully that the other party, if they are engaged in playing the same game, will not be able to discover it."

Captain Pat had become strangely interested in this matter, although to look at it in a cold, businesslike way there wasn't any large amount of money in it for him.

"Still a man who is as well situated in the world as I am can afford to work for fun sometimes, and then, there is a pleasure, too, in playing a good game against an experienced adversary, and I have an idea that the party this time is A No. 1.

"Luckily, too, there isn't any particularly pressing business on hand, so I will be able to put my whole force on this job, and most decidedly I will do all in my power to bring the old man out a winner."

And so it happened that the plotter was correct in his assumption that there was a watch upon the man from Orleans.

Thanks to Captain Pat's manner of doing business that watch was never suspended by day or night, but went on just the same through the silent watches of the midnight hours as during the busy minutes when the sun shone.

And all sorts of odd people Captain McGowen employed in a game of this kind, men and women, gentle and simple, old and young and apparently filling all sorts of stations in life, from that of people of wealth and leisure down to men who were glad to get a penny for keeping the street-crossing clean, and toil-worn women who earned a scanty subsistence by scrubbing offices.

Even the youngsters who frequent the streets were utilized by the acute detective.

A pug-nosed bootblack or a ragged newspaper boy, or one of the shrill-voiced girls who sell papers, flowers and fruit by odd turns, could sometimes do a little bit of detective work that it would be impossible for a grown person to accomplish.

And so it happened that the moment the colonel and his guide started there was a follower upon his track.

As the reader will probably remember, the pair, when they left the Astor House took a cab which carried them to the ferry at the foot of Grand street which is on the East River, as it is called.

The driver had been instructed to proceed by a roundabout way, and for the first ten minutes of the journey the man who was conducting the scheme had kept a busy lookout behind him, fearful of seeing another cab strike in on the trail.

But no vehicle gave chase, and the schemer congratulated himself that he had succeeded in eluding the watch which had been put upon the veteran.

With all his shrewdness the plotter had not considered that the course taken by the cab might be ascertained by some other means than by the old-time expedient of giving chase with another cab.

This plan would answer of course, unless the one cab managed to evade the other; but it had the disadvantage of allowing the pursued to know that he was followed, and this was a decided disadvantage.

On this occasion Captain Pat had planned so well that the cab was followed and without the inmates having the slightest suspicion of the fact.

Even the cabman, who had been well paid by his employer, and instructed to be sure and evade pursuit, if any was given—the story of a lawsuit and a desire to avoid the legal service of certain papers being given as an excuse—despite the vigilant watch he kept had no suspicion that the enemy was on his track.

The driver was to have an extra five-dollar bill if he succeeded in landing his passengers at the Grand street ferry-house without a follower being at their heels.

He succeeded—so they all thought—and received his money.

But the follower was there all the same!

The word follower hardly describes the case correctly though, for the spy had not followed, but came with the cab, perched on behind like an overgrown monkey.

It was a little, undersized boy bootblack, and he had played his part of the spy so well that when the pair entered the ferry-house they had not the least suspicion that they were pursued.

When they disappeared in the cabin of the ferry-boat the boy drew a card from his pocket and wrote on it in "printing" letters, the best he could do in this line:

"GRAND STREET FERRY TO BROADWAY."

Then he ran up to the policeman who was lounging outside the ferry-house and gave him the card, saying:

"Hey, mister, put this through right away, won't yer?"

And then before the astonished officer could ask any questions the boy darted into the ferry-house.

The card explained everything.

It was gotten up somewhat after the fashion of the Government postal cards.

On one side was the message and on the other a printed request from the Superintendent of the New York Police Force that the message on the other side of the card be immediately sent by the nearest telephone to Police Headquarters.

Anticipating that he had a difficult case on hand, Captain Pat had sought the aid of the Central Office and arranged this excellent scheme.

So before the boat was made fast to the Williamsburg shore the contents of the card were known to the detective.

At Williamsburg, as the reader will remember, the wily plotter "doubled" on his tracks like a hunted fox, and took the boat back to New York by the long ferry which lands in the lower part of the city at Roosevelt street.

Again the card gave intelligence of the move, and as the message was put through immediately the intelligence reached the detective before the boat started.

"There's some deep game afoot, or else all this trouble would not be taken," Captain Pat remarked to his principal assistant. "But I will be in at the death, let them double all they will!"

CHAPTER XX. AN INTERRUPTION.

WHEN the boat arrived on the New York side the pair quitted it and took a Belt Line car bound "up-town."

Again the bootblack dispatched the warning card, then, making a dash ahead, succeeded in getting on the front platform of the car without attracting the attention of the men whom he was shadowing.

He was aided in this movement by the fact that the car was crowded with a party of belated excursionists, most of whom were more or less under the influence of liquor.

At Twenty-third street the pair took the ferry again to the Greenpoint district of Brooklyn.

Again the warning was sent, and again the spy followed as faithfully upon their track as their shadows.

In Greenpoint the boy tracked them to the old house which they entered—it was only about ten minutes' walk from the ferry—and the spy, coming to the conclusion that he had tracked the pair to their lair, hastened to the nearest telegraph station, which was in the neighborhood of the ferry-house, and dispatched the following brief message:

"NUF SED. KUM."

And now, having described how skillfully the boy-tracker had performed his task, we will return to the precious couple whom we left preparing to burn the old house.

"The place is like tinder, and as we haven't had any rain for about a month, it will burn

furiously when it once gets agoing," the arch-conspirator observed.

"Oh, yes; there isn't any doubt about that," Clendenning remarked.

"And we don't want to have anything go wrong, either; no flash in the pan, you know, for that wouldn't do at all."

"Oh, no; we will take care that nothing of that kind happens. But there isn't the least fear of it."

"This is a thinly inhabited neighborhood, for very few of the old rookeries hereabouts are used for dwelling-houses, and as the hour is late the fire will not be apt to be discovered until it is well under way, for there isn't any travel to speak of in this street at such a late hour as this."

"I can understand that readily enough, for it is a beastly hole of a place," the master-spirit remarked.

And then he added:

"Come, we are wasting time; let us get to work. It must be near midnight."

He consulted his watch and found that it was a few minutes after twelve.

"It is even later than I thought; but it will not take us long to fire the old barracks."

"And 'do' the insurance men," added the other with a grin, as though he thought this to be a particularly good joke.

But just as the pair were about to set to work there came an interruption in the shape of a vigorous pounding on the front door.

Both of the two started like the guilty men which they were in reality.

"What the deuce is that?" the master-spirit cried, sinking his voice to a hoarse whisper, as though he feared being overheard.

"I don't know."

"Must be some mistake—no one has lived here for a long time and there's no reason why any one should want to enter here."

"We had better not take any notice and then, whoever it is, will be apt to go away."

But that the applicant for admission had no such intention at present was made evident by another vigorous pounding on the door.

"Do you suppose it is possible that any gleam of the light can be seen from the outside?" the leader asked, with a nervous glance at the flickering candle on the barrel.

"Oh, no, we're in a back room here, and it ain't much better than a penny dip, anyway."

"That is true, and now I remember, I couldn't distinguish a bit of light even after I got into the entry."

"It must be some drunken fellow," Clendenning suggested.

But drunk or sober the man was determined to get into the house, for he now began a most violent attack on the door.

A thought flashed into the head of the leader which made him feel decidedly uneasy.

Was it possible that he and the man whom he had entrapped had been followed?

Was it the police who were now thundering at the door?

He did not give open utterance to this fear, for he had not admitted his companion to his confidence, and Clendenning had no suspicions in regard to the stranger in the cellar.

A moment's thought convinced the alarmed man that the knocking did not proceed from the officers of the law, for they are gentlemen who are not possessed of much patience in matters of this kind, and are generally apt to make known who they are, and what their business is, right at the beginning.

The violent pounding on the door continued, and both of the conspirators grew more and more nervous.

"I say, I think we ought to go and say something to this idiot!" Clendenning exclaimed.

"If he keeps on in this way he will raise the neighborhood, and in the way we are fixed just now it will be ugly to have any impertinent inquiries made about us."

"Yes, perhaps we had better ask what he wants," Eberhard said, reluctantly, for he, far more than his companion, realized how dangerous their position might become if urgent inquiry was made in regard to them.

Taking the candle the pair went through the front room to the door, proceeding noiselessly, and Clendenning shielded the candlelight with his hat, so as to prevent it from being seen from the outside.

There wasn't much danger of this, though, for the windows were guarded with heavy wooden shutters, and as there wasn't any cracks in them, a brighter illumination than that afforded by the dim light of the candle would not have reached the street.

Eberhard listened for a moment at the door.

"I think there is only one man," he said in a whisper to Clendenning, an ugly frown darkening his brow.

"Can't we find a club somewhere and lay the fellow out?" asked the other.

"We might get a weapon yonder," and Eberhard indicated the broken banisters of the stairs.

"They will do splendidly," and Clendenning immediately possessed himself of two of the stout rods, one of which he handed to his companion.

"First we will try to find out what the fellow

wants; we may be able to induce him to go away peaceably," observed the other.

Just at this point the attack upon the door began again.

"Hiallo, hallo, what do you want?" cried Eberhard, gruffly, assuming a loud, coarse voice.

"Be the howly poker! is it yerself that's up at last?" answered a voice, which plainly betrayed that its owner was a son of the Emerald Isle.

"What do you want?"

"It's yerself that I want, Phelim, me jewel!" replied the outsider.

"Here I've been poundin' the face off the dure and skinnin' me knuckles for the last hour, an' divil a sign have yez been afther making."

"L'ave me in, now."

"You have made a mistake—got the wrong house!" growled Eberhard, in his roughest tones.

"Oh, no, shure yez can't play that on the likes of me!" retorted the other, confidently.

"Shure, I know yez well enough."

"No, you don't, and I don't know you. Be off about your business or I'll call the police and have you locked up."

This was an ill-timed threat, for it at once excited the furious anger of the man upon the outside.

"Is that the way ye tr'ate yer own brother, ye murtherin' thafe of the wourld?"

"Come out here till I b'ate yez black and blue."

"It is a drunken fool of an Irishman who has made a mistake in regard to the house," said Clendenning.

"Yes, I guess that is it."

"And the quickest way to get rid of him will be to let him see that he has made a mistake. You can't make anything out of such a brute by trying to ride over him, you know; easy does it—catch more flies with molasses than vinegar, every time."

"You are right; suppose you try and see what you can do with him."

"I will."

And then he addressed the man.

"See here, my friend, you have made a mistake," he said. "There isn't any one in this house but myself and partner, who are hired to watch the property. Your brother must live somewhere else, for no one lives in this house."

"Open the door and l'ave me see yez an' thin I'll be satisfied."

After consulting with Eberhard, Clendenning opened the door.

CHAPTER XXI.

A SURPRISE.

By this time the moon was out full and strong, and so the two within the house were able to get a good view of the man who had raised such a row at the door.

He was a muscular-looking Irishman, with a red face and flowing red hair and whiskers, poorly dressed, and evidently under the influence of liquor.

"Have yez opened the dure at last?" he inquired in a manner which he intended to be intensely sarcastic.

"Yes, as you seemed determined upon getting in."

"An' where's me brother?"

"How the deuce should I know?"

"Phelim McCarthy, do ye mind?"

"I haven't the pleasure of his acquaintance."

"He's in the house beyant," the disturber of the public peace exclaimed in a tone of strong conviction.

"No, he isn't."

"If you tell me I lie I'll hit yez in the gob!" exclaimed the other in a decidedly hostile manner.

Clendenning had his club hidden away behind him, and when the Irishman spoke in this unseemly fashion he had hard work to refrain from yielding to the impulse which bade him "sail in" to the Irishman and club him immediately.

"Oh, no, I wouldn't do such a thing for the world," he replied in his smoothest tones, restraining his wrath.

"You have made a mistake, that is all. Your brother doesn't live here—no one does, as I told you. You are at the wrong house."

"The wrong house is it?" quoth the stranger, in a decidedly suspicious way.

"Yes, that is what I said."

"Mebbe it is trying to play some trick on me, ye are!"

It was plainly to be seen that the Irishman was an extremely bull-headed sort of a fellow.

"No, no, why should I want to play any trick upon you," responded Clendenning, trying to keep his temper and resist the impulse which was so strong to end the discussion by giving the man a whack over the head with the club, and by so doing knock some sense into him.

"Arrah, how can the likes of me tell," responded the Irishman, scratching his head in a puzzled sort of way.

"You have made a mistake, I tell you; got in the wrong street, perhaps—the wrong house, undoubtedly, for your brother is not here, and I am sure I never saw you before."

"Isn't that me brother hiding behind yez?" cried the man, abruptly, peering over Clendenning's shoulder into the dark entry.

It was plain from this remark that the Irishman had caught sight of Eberhard, and so that worthy judged it wise to come forward.

"I am not your brother as you can plainly see, if you have any eyes in your head!" Eberhard exclaimed, angrily.

"Shure and I can! Me brother is a better-looking man than ever stood in your dirty shoes, do yez mind that, ye miserable spalpeen!" the other retorted.

"You had better clear out before you get in trouble!" Eberhard warned, thinking to frighten the man off, for the adventurer had not the least idea of troubling the police if he could possibly avoid it.

"Me brother is in the house, and I'm going in, do ye mind!" cried the man, doggedly, closing his fists as he spoke and brandishing them menacingly in the air.

"Oh, yes, come in by all means!" exclaimed Eberhard, nodding in a warning way to Clendenning.

"Oh, yes, come in!" replied the other, who immediately guessed the plan of the master conspirator.

As the man was determined upon coming in, the only course open to them was to get him into the entry and then club him until he would be glad to get out.

Eberhard threw the door wide open, and both he and Clendenning prepared to give the stranger a particularly warm reception.

But events did not progress exactly as they had anticipated, for the Irishman had not advanced bull-headed into the darkness, as they had expected.

On the contrary, he paused on the threshold, and suddenly pulled out a revolver, and then, with an entire change of tone, cried:

"You are my prisoners! throw up your hands and surrender, or I'll put a bullet through you!"

The surprise was complete, for neither one of the two had the slightest suspicion that the supposed Irishman was a detective officer in disguise.

It was the truth, though, and the detective was no other than our hero, Captain Pat McGowen.

Clendenning "weakened" immediately, to use the common term.

"Hold on, hold on, don't shoot! I surrender!" he exclaimed, throwing down his club and extending his hands appealingly to the detective.

Eberhard being made of stouter material and knowing, too, the extent of the danger which he ran, of which his companion was in ignorance, pretended to submit in order to gain time.

"Don't fire, I'll surrender!" he said, and he, too, threw down the club with which he was armed.

"That is right; nothing like being reasonable when you find you are in a tight place," the detective remarked.

"Hold out your wrists now, so I can snap the bracelets on them."

Eberhard advanced and held out his hands, affecting to be terribly under the influence of fear and trembling visibly.

Captain Pat noticed this, as well as the terror with which the other seemed to be inspired, and from the fact came to the conclusion that they were only a pair of tools, and that he had not yet unearthed the master villain.

"I hope to heaven that he has not taken the alarm and escaped," he murmured, as he prepared to snap the handcuffs upon Eberhard's wrists.

Even the wisest and shrewdest of men are sometimes taken unawares, and although the detective force of the metropolis could not boast of a better officer than our hero, yet on this occasion, he being in a measure thrown off his guard by the prompt surrender of the two ruffians, and thinking that they were only a pair of common rascals, who would not be apt to make any more trouble, and at the same time worrying his brain to devise some plan so that the leader might not escape, he was not on his guard as usual.

His right hand clutched the revolver which menaced the pair of scoundrels, in his left he held the handcuffs, which were of the latest pattern and so arranged that it was very little trouble to spring them upon the wrists of a criminal.

Old, experienced man-hunter as Captain Pat McGowen was, yet he was so completely deceived by the excellent acting of Eberhard that he had not the slightest suspicion that any resistance was intended until, as he attempted to spring the first handcuff upon the wrist of the prisoner the arch-conspirator, without the slightest warning of such a thing, sprang forward with tremendous force and, lowering his head as he did so, "bucked" the detective officer in the face.

The blow was a terrible one and Captain Pat went over backward with about as much celerity as though he had been shot.

Eberhard in his desperation had conceived the idea of making the detective a prisoner, for as Captain Pat had not called upon any one to aid him in making the arrests he had come

to the conclusion that the man-hunter was alone.

But the moment Captain McGowen struck the ground a shrill cry of alarm came from the street and a boyish voice yelled "Police!" at the top of his lungs.

It was the bootblack who had so successfully played the spy for the detective officer.

He had been crouched in a doorway without, and the moment he beheld the detective fall he was prompt to give the alarm.

At first the insane idea came into the head of Eberhard to give chase to the boy, silence him, and then return to the detective officer.

But this idea was abandoned almost as soon as it was formed, for Captain Pat had been by no means "knocked out" by the blow he had received, and when Eberhard perceived this, and saw he was about to rise to renew the conflict—the revolver had been forced from the hand of the detective by the shock occasioned by his abrupt downfall, or else most certainly the assailant would not have had any time to deliberate upon a course of action—he understood that flight alone was left for him.

With a wild bound he leaped over the prostrate detective and sped up the street.

Captain Pat, all of a sudden coming to the conclusion that this man was the real leader of the enterprise, followed fast in pursuit.

And to add to the difficulties of the fugitive, alarm raps from policemen's clubs resounding in the air told that the officers were on the alert.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE NOVICE'S PRESENT.

THE accident which had occurred to Miss Philippa only delayed the rising of the curtain some ten minutes, a "wait" which was patiently borne by the audience, as they fully comprehended the reason for the delay.

And then the performance proceeded as usual.

The "fairy queen" was received with vast applause when she made her appearance, and it was plain that the peril to which she had been exposed, and from which she had so happily escaped, had produced a decidedly favorable impression upon the patrons of the Bijou Opera House.

"Strange how such things operate sometimes," the burlesque queen remarked to Blanche Cunningham, who chanced to be standing by her side when Philippa received the greetings of the audience.

"That accident will make the little minx a favorite, and I shouldn't be surprised if she became one of the stars of the party."

"Well, she's a good girl and deserves to succeed," responded the other.

"Oh, I forgot that you are a champion of hers," Diana remarked, with a slightly sarcastic smile.

"Well, that is your doings, for you recommended her to me."

"Yes, I believe I did; but I didn't have any idea that you were going to take such a violent fancy to her, all of a sudden."

"She's a sweet girl, and I don't see how any one can help liking her."

"And you think she is talented, too, I believe?" and there was a decided sneer on the face of the burlesque queen as she put the question.

"I do not think there is any doubt about it," replied the other, bluntly.

"If she wasn't, she couldn't go ahead so rapidly as she has."

"Just see how she is doing to-night. If she had been an old stager, with a dozen years' practice, she couldn't do any better."

"Yes, but she has been an amateur for years, and that accounts for it. It is almost the same as regular training."

"But I say, Miss Duclou, you really speak as if you had taken a dislike to the girl," observed the stately Blanche who was always extremely blunt in her remarks.

"No, I hav'n't; why should I? The child has never done anything to me!" responded Diana, evidently annoyed at the freedom of the speech.

"I will admit, though, that sometimes I have a sort of a feeling which seems to tell me that the girl is destined to cause me trouble," frankly confessed the actress, for a wonder taking the trouble to explain herself, a thing she rarely did to any one.

"Of course, it is all an idle fancy and I am foolish to give way to it—more foolish, too, to harbor any prejudice against the girl."

"You are her friend, Blanche, and I speak frankly to you: much more frankly than I would speak to any one else."

"Yes, I can readily believe that."

"I will fight against the feeling, though, and I will not allow it to urge me to do the girl any injustice."

"She shall not have anything but good treatment at my hands."

"Oh, I know you are usually fair," the other observed.

"Yes, I am, if I have my own way and am not worried; but I say Philippa has made a conquest worth making."

"You mean the elderly gentleman in the box who threw her the bouquet."

"Yes, and there's some nice little present in the box attached to the bouquet, I'll be bound," the burlesque queen observed.

"Here's his present to me," and she held up her hand so that Blanche could see the diamond in the ring glistening upon her finger.

"That is only to buy my influence, you know, for he is terribly smitten with Philippa."

And then she proceeded to relate to the other what a great man Judge Billy was.

"She is such a queer girl, though, that I do not believe she will regard the affair as a compliment," Blanche observed.

"Oh, she'll soon get over that nonsense!" the burlesque queen retorted in contempt.

"This is one of the most influential men in New York, very rich and unmarried."

"Such fellows have made fools of themselves—as the world considers—for the sake of a pretty actress before now."

"Yes, but it is not common for them to do so," Miss Cunningham remarked.

Blanche was a remarkably clear-headed girl, one not at all given to romance, but inclined to take a matter-of-fact view of everything.

"True, every one who buys a ticket in the lottery does not strike a prize, but the fortunate ones do," the burlesque queen retorted.

"This man is evidently deeply infatuated, and if Philippa plays her cards rightly, I should not be at all surprised if she captures him."

"Of course, such a thing might happen," Blanche admitted.

"But it doesn't seem to be very likely."

"You do not take into consideration the facts of the case," Miss Duclois urged.

"This man is not like some young scion of our English nobility, with a large number of influential relatives, ready to cry out in horror at the bare idea of such a thing as a union with an actress."

"No young sprig ready to run after every new face; this man is old and settled—is worth no end of money, so he can afford to take a wife who can't bring him anything."

"And then the chances are, too, that in his youth he was a bricklayer, or a shoemaker, or something of that sort—that is the kind of men these strange Americans make judges of; so, as far as birth is concerned, her family is probably as good as his, if not better."

"Oh, I haven't the least doubt about that, for though Philippa is a close-mouthed puss and is never willing to talk much about herself, yet any one who is any judge at all can see that she is a lady, and has been brought up in the best manner."

"She's a lady, fast enough, and there isn't the least doubt that she is fully good enough for the man; and I tell you, Blanche, if she is only careful how she plays her game she can win him."

"Perhaps she will not want to try."

"Nonsense!"

"She is a strange girl, you know."

"Yes, I know that."

"She isn't a bit like the usual girl of her age."

"Very quiet and odd."

"And I think the chances are great that she will not care to accept the attentions of this great man, notwithstanding the advantages he can offer."

The burlesque queen shook her head in a doubtful manner.

"She surely would never be idiot enough to refuse such a man!"

"The idea may come into her head that she can't possibly care for him."

"What has that got to do with it? She can't marry him all the same."

"Of course, I don't suppose that there would be much of a love-match about it."

"She is a young and beautiful girl and he is an old and wealthy man."

"His money and position are placed against her youth and beauty, and there's the whole story in a nutshell. No sentiment—no romance about it, but all business from beginning to end."

Blanche shook her head.

"I don't think Philippa will be willing to make any such trade."

"If she isn't the biggest kind of a goose she will be glad to jump at the chance!" the burlesque queen retorted.

And here the conversation ended, both being called to attend to the business of the stage at this moment.

Philippa did not seem to have any particular curiosity in regard to the contents of the box, for she did not attempt to open it, and it was not until the close of the performance that she did so.

And then it was at Miss Cunningham's suggestion.

The two girls had resumed their street clothes, and were about to leave the theater when Blanche noticed the bouquet lying neglected upon the dressing-place with the tiny box still attached just as if it had been thrown upon the stage.

"Well, for a woman you are not particularly curious," Miss Cunningham observed.

"Why do you think so?"

"You haven't taken the trouble to see what is in the box attached to your bouquet."

Philippa smiled.

"In truth I forgot all about it. The accident which happened to me drove all thoughts of the bouquet from my mind."

"Well, I don't wonder at that; it is natural enough. But take a look at it now. I have an idea you will find it to contain a handsome present."

"Miss Duclois got just such a box attached to a bouquet this evening, and in the box was a beautiful diamond ring."

Philippa shook her head.

"There is a great difference between Miss Duclois, who is the bright particular star of the troupe, and an humble member of the company like myself."

"For all that I am willing to bet you what you like that you have a handsomer present in your box than Miss Duclois had in hers."

"We will soon see."

Philippa opened the box.

Blanche was right.

It contained a diamond ring far exceeding in value the one which had been bestowed upon the burlesque queen.

CHAPTER XXIII.

GOOD ADVICE.

MISS CUNNINGHAM, with all a woman's natural love for such sparkling baubles, uttered a cry of delight when her eyes fell upon the ring.

"Oh, isn't it perfectly sweet!" she exclaimed, rapturously.

"Yes, it is very pretty," Philippa observed, a serious look upon her face, quite a contrast to the expression of delight which sat upon Miss Cunningham's features.

"Pretty! well, I should say it was! It is just magnificent! There's a present worth having."

"Wasn't I right now? Didn't I tell you that your present would be better than Miss Diana's?"

"Yes, you were right," and Philippa surveyed the ring with a thoughtful air, the expression upon her face puzzling her companion.

"Why, how grave you look—you do not seem to be at all delighted!" Blanche exclaimed, surprisedly.

"Because I do not understand this matter at all. Why should any one—a total stranger, of course—make me a costly present of this kind?"

"It surely never cost a cent less than fifty dollars."

"Fifty dollars!"

"Yes, I think it must have cost that, although I really know so little about such things that I am not much of a judge, and I may have set the value too high."

"Why, Philippa, it never cost less than a hundred and fifty dollars!"

"A hundred and fifty dollars!" cried the girl, in astonishment.

"Yes, every penny of it! It would be worth that in England, and diamonds cost more in this country."

"Just how much more I don't know, but considerable. In fact, I shouldn't be surprised if that ring cost nearer two hundred dollars than a hundred and fifty."

"Oh, I hadn't any idea that it cost any such sum of money as that!"

"You can understand now what a triumph it is for you."

"Come, ladies, hurry up, please!" called out the janitor, whose duty it was to turn out the gas in the theater, and who was waiting impatiently for the girls to leave the dressing-room.

"Come along, Philippa, we can talk the matter over as we go home."

The other nodded assent, carefully returned the ring to its box and then placed it in her wallet.

Leaving the theater, they gained the street and were soon on their homeward road.

In the street the conversation was presently resumed.

"Do you know, Blanche, that I don't feel at all right about this ring?" Philippa said, the look upon her face being even more serious than it was before.

"I don't think I understand you."

"Why should I receive such a magnificent present?"

Blanche laughed.

"You are fishing for a compliment, now, eh?"

"Oh, no; indeed, I am not, and I don't see why you should say such a thing."

"And are you really in doubt in regard to the matter?"

"Indeed, I am."

"Philippa, you are about the most innocent little goose I ever encountered."

"Perhaps I am, but I don't know it," the other replied, evidently puzzled.

"Well, the present was made to you because the gentleman who gave it considers that you are one of the handsomest and sweetest girls he ever saw."

"Oh, fie, Blanche; how can you say such a thing?" Philippa exclaimed, blushing rosy red at the extravagant praise.

"But he does—there isn't any mistake about the matter. He goes about two hundred dollars on it, as witness the diamond ring, and a

man must be very much in earnest when he backs his opinion in such a forcible way."

"But such a thing as this is so strange to me," the girl urged.

"The idea that a perfect stranger should make me such a present!"

"Yes; but you don't seem to understand that it is a gentle hint that the man wishes to become acquainted with you."

"Your beauty and talent, and all that sort of thing, has captivated him and he is just dying to make your acquaintance, and the bestowal on you of the costly diamond ring is a gentle hint that he is a man of means who holds his money as lightly as the purse wherein it is carried."

"Do you know who the gentleman is?"

"Oh, yes."

"I am glad of that."

"Why so?"

"Because I want to send his ring back."

Blanche looked astonished.

"You don't mean it?"

"Oh, yes, I do; now that I know how valuable the present is I couldn't think of keeping it."

"You are a goose!"

"Perhaps so; but goose or not, it doesn't seem right to me to keep it."

"My dear child, you must not think of doing anything so foolish."

"But it is not foolish."

"Indeed it is."

"How so?"

"The ring is one of the spoils of war, and most certainly you ought to keep it."

"Would you?"

"Most certainly!"

Philippa was silenced for a moment by the decided answer, but not at all convinced.

She pondered over the matter for a moment and then exclaimed:

"But it isn't right for me to keep so valuable a present."

"What has the value to do with it?"

"A great deal, I should think."

"Very little indeed. Allow me to argue the point with you," Blanche remarked in her positive way.

"You received quite a number of floral offerings to-night?"

"Yes, and I was really astonished at the number."

"It runs that way sometimes. In the bouquet business it is either a feast or a famine. In my case it is rather a famine just at present, for I haven't succeeded in capturing any admirers who are flush enough with cash to do the noble in the flower line."

"Why, you certainly received some magnificent bouquets to-night," Philippa exclaimed.

"Yes, but they were not honest—that is, one or two may have been all right, cheap, inexpensive things, but the rest were all box-office."

"All box-office?" said the other, evidently in doubt in regard to the meaning of the phrase.

"Yes, bless your innocent soul, you are such a little greenhorn in regard to some things appertaining to this great and glorious profession which you have chosen."

"Now box-office flowers convey no particular meaning to your unsophisticated soul."

"No, excepting that I suppose you mean that the flowers were paid for at the box-office and therefore were not genuine tributes of admiration," replied Philippa, after taking time to think the matter over for a few moments.

"That is the explanation. You have hit it, exactly."

"In matters theatrical it is always necessary to get up an excitement, and if the public seem to be at all lukewarm, a fictitious excitement must be aroused, so that the dear people, who, in matters of this kind, are a great deal like a flock of sheep, going on the 'follow my leader' plan, will be persuaded to go and do likewise."

"And as floral tributes are sometimes taken to measure the popularity of an actress, the manager kindly provides a sufficient number for the stars of the troupe, hoping that the paying audience may be induced to do likewise."

"But, dear, these bouquets are never returned to be used again the next night; that is a fiction of the penny-a-liner, anxious to get up a readable article."

"To return to my argument though. One of your bouquets came to-night from a young swell in the front row of the orchestra, about the fourth chair from the aisle on the left."

"I saw the fellow when he half-rose in his seat for the purpose of attracting your attention, and then threw the bouquet."

"A nice little chap with his light hair parted in the middle, and such a funny, little yellow mustache."

"Yes, I noticed him."

"And when you picked up the bouquet he clapped his hands and said, 'Bravo! Bravo!' Just as he if he imagined himself an Italian at the opera."

"Yes, and the rest laughed."

"Exactly, delighted to see him make a donkey of himself. Well, I recognized the class to which the young man belonged immediately."

"A ten-dollar-a-week clerk—no disgrace in that of course, for many a rich man had a poorer start, but trying to pass for one of the swells

of the town, throwing his bouquet with as lordly an air as though he had gold galore at his command.

"Now, my point is this: this poor fellow's bouquet cost about a dollar, and he really has nothing but his beggarly stipend upon which to live, while this Judge Goodfellow who bestowed upon you the diamond is a millionaire and can afford to give you a thousand-dollar present better than the poor clerk can the dollar bouquet.

"Now, if you think you must give the diamond back, then, in justice to the clerk, he should have his bouquet."

Philippa did not reply for a few moments, walking on in silence with her head bent to the ground, and then finally raising her eyes to her companion's face, she said:

"I can't answer your argument, but I shall give back the diamond ring, while retaining the bouquet."

"Of course!" cried Miss Cunningham with an indignant sniff.

"That is the way with a woman always. Not one in a hundred can understand logic at all. Really, at times I feel ashamed of my sex!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE INTRODUCTION.

Now, though Miss Cunningham had not agreed in all respects with the burlesque queen in regard to Philippa and the millionaire judge, yet in the case of the diamond she certainly thought the girl was acting foolishly in deciding to return it; still, when the two reached their home, and she came to think over the matter after Philippa had fallen asleep, she reached the conclusion that—looking at the matter from the girl's stand-point—she was not so far wrong.

Philippa now roomed with Miss Cunningham. Blanche had a large back room on the same floor that Philippa's apartment was situated, and when she learned of the assassin's attack on her friend she insisted upon Philippa sharing her room.

For as Blanche justly said:

"He must be a bold man who would dare to attack two girls, and one of them such a rattler as I am."

She always kept the gas in the room burning low throughout the night, and on this occasion, being troubled with a fit of sleeplessness, she remained awake while Philippa slept.

She glanced at the sweet, innocent face of the girl, and then shook her head.

"She is right," she muttered, "although she didn't attempt to answer my argument."

"Her pure instincts have not been perverted by the garish life of the stage. She has not yet come to be a kin to the horse-leech's daughter, and learned to cry 'Give, give!'"

"By accepting the ring she would, in a measure, put herself under obligation to the man."

"His intents may be good, but are just as likely to be bad; but, good or bad, I can see clearly that Philippa is not for him."

"The chances are that there will be trouble, for if I read the signs aright this judge is a man who has been accustomed to having his own way, and no doubt he will feel intensely annoyed when he discovers that she is not disposed to look with a favorable eye upon him."

"He will be apt to be ugly, and, possibly, Philippa, so innocent and incapable of taking her own part in a matter of this kind, would have a hard time to get along, if she didn't have an old stager like myself at her back."

"But as I have taken a fancy to the girl, I will fight her battle just as if it was my own, and if she was my sister I could not do any more for her than I will do."

And then, after making this singularly good resolution, the stately Blanche fell asleep.

The next morning there was a rehearsal called at eleven for the purpose of trying some new music which was to be introduced in the piece on the second week, and so the two girls went to the Opera House.

During the rehearsal Miss Cunningham took an opportunity to inform the burlesque queen in regard to the decision which Philippa had arrived at touching the ring.

"Oh, you don't mean to say that the child will do anything so foolish?" Diana exclaimed, in amazement.

"She seems firmly resolved to follow that course."

"And didn't you attempt to remonstrate with her?"

"Oh, yes."

"And she wouldn't be guided by you?"

"No, she is obstinate in the matter, and although she frankly admitted that I had the best of the argument, yet she is going to give back the ring all the same."

"She is not yet an old-enough member of the profession to understand that 'spoiling the Egyptians' is one of the tricks of the trade. The outsiders swindle us every chance they get, and it is only fair for the tables to be turned once in a while," the actress observed, sarcastically.

"But, possibly, she will not find it so easy to return the ring as she imagines; that is, if the

gentleman is anything like the man I take him to be."

And this ended the conversation.

Blanche had succeeded in discovering one thing, and that was that in this matter the burlesque queen would be far more likely to aid the wealthy judge than the actress in her employ.

About twenty minutes before the rehearsal ended, Miss Duclois went in front of the theater, and there, as had been arranged, was introduced to Judge Goodfellow.

The judge complimented the actress in the highest manner upon the excellence of the entertainment she was giving, and expressed his belief that she was good for a year's stay in New York.

Then, after a few minutes' conversation, the judge spoke of the young lady who played the fairy queen, Miss Philippa Edmonds, and expressed his belief that there was a bright future, professionally, before the young lady.

"She is not an imported article, I understand," remarked Goodfellow in conclusion.

"Oh, no, she is an American girl; from somewhere in Virginia, I believe, although that is but little better than guess-work, as the young lady is not disposed to be communicative in regard to herself."

"I have taken a great interest in the lady, and should be delighted to make her acquaintance," observed the judge, "if it can be arranged."

"Oh, certainly, I will act as a mutual friend in the case," said the burlesque queen with one of her sweetest smiles.

And then she turned to Colonel Richmond, in whose private office the interview was taking place.

"Colonel, will you kindly send one of your young men to tell Miss Edmonds that when the rehearsal is over I would like to see her here?"

"Certainly," responded the manager, and the office boy was at once dispatched on the quest.

The rehearsal had just come to an end when the message was delivered.

Miss Cunningham was standing by Philippa's side, and she looked into her companion's face while she listened to the words.

The girl was entirely unsuspecting though, and made an answer that she would come immediately.

"Well, if you ain't the dearest little innocent duck that I ever did see," Blanche exclaimed, after the boy departed.

"What do you mean?" asked Philippa, amazed.

"Haven't you any idea why Miss Duclois wants to see you in the front of the house?"

Philippa shook her head.

"You are totally unsuspecting."

"I suppose I am."

"It isn't about any business appertaining to the stage I'll go bail," Blanche exclaimed.

She was inclined to be decidedly free and easy in her speech.

"Why else should she wish to see me?"

"She may have a gentleman friend or two there whom she would like to introduce to you."

The bright blush swept up into the girl's face and she seemed decidedly confused.

"What shall I do?" she murmured.

"Do? why, go and be introduced, of course; there isn't anything else that you can do, without acting in an unlady-like manner, besides giving offense to the woman from whom you are getting your bread and butter."

"Besides, there's nothing wrong about the matter. Miss Duclois by introducing the gentlemen to you guarantees that they are all right."

"But I don't wish to know any one."

"Of course, I understand all about that, but even if you are introduced it doesn't follow that you need to give the gentleman, or gentlemen, as the case may be, the pleasure of your intimate acquaintance."

"Thank Heaven the actress is only the property of the public while she is on the stage. In her home she can be as exclusive as she likes, and the most persistent adorer cannot gain admittance to her presence unless she so pleases."

"The footlights are her protection and shield, while the saleslady is obliged to be polite and agreeable to every fool of a man who chooses to stop at her counter, whether he wants to buy anything or not."

"I'll go with you, and if the party is the judge, as I suspect, you will have an opportunity to return him his ring."

Philippa's presence of mind immediately returned when she found that Blanche would accompany her, and so, in company, the two girls proceeded to the front of the house.

As the reader knows, Miss Cunningham's prediction was correct.

It was the judge, and Miss Duclois introduced him to the two actresses.

"Billy" Goodfellow was not much of a ladies' man, but he tried his best to be agreeable, so as to produce a favorable impression.

He talked of the performance, told how well-pleased he was with it, hoped the ladies liked New York, felt sure they ought to, as New York had taken a great fancy to them, and then said,

carelessly, that he would be delighted to take them driving any pleasant afternoon so as to show the sights of the town.

The burlesque queen, taking it upon herself to speak for all, said they would be happy to accept, and that if he was not engaged, next Thursday would be a good day.

"You can come to my house, ladies, and go from there," she said, in conclusion.

To refuse seemed ungracious, and so the pair accepted the invitation, and then, plucking up courage, Philippa spoke of the ring, but, to her astonishment, the judge pretended not to know anything about it.

"Oh, no, not mine, you know; the floral ornaments, ship, and horseshoe, I plead guilty to, but not the ring."

"My advice to you is to keep it, keep it as a trophy of an unknown conquest."

"But if you don't want to do that, sell it and give the money to the poor, or, better still, advertise in the newspapers for the owner, and if you will only sign your name to the advertisement I warrant it will create a sensation."

There was a general laugh at this, and the interview terminated.

So the judge had decidedly the best of the matter.

Miss Cunningham felt anxious, for she saw that this persistent suitor was no common man.

CHAPTER XXV.

A DESPERATE DEED.

THE course that the fugitive adopted was the only one that under the circumstances seemed to promise him any chance of escape.

And even this desperate dash for liberty appeared likely to fail, for the alarm had been given in such a manner that the whole neighborhood seemed to be aroused.

Straight along the street, turning his back upon the ferry, raced the fugitive.

Immediately it had flashed upon him that safety, if it was found at all, was to be secured in a different direction from that in which the ferry was located.

In the neighborhood of the ferry there were always loungers even at so late an hour as this.

Policemen were usually to be found there, and the odds were great that there would be plenty of willing hands to grasp him if he fled that way.

In the opposite direction, however, all was quiet; it was a dark, thinly-inhabited section, and there was some hope that if he could only succeed in outrunning his pursuers he might find some dark corner in which to hide until the search was given up.

Eberhard had only a few feet start, for Captain Pat was on his feet almost immediately, but he was compelled to allow the fugitive to gain a little more headway on account of the necessity of attending to the other prisoner.

Now that one man had got away, although he felt pretty certain that he would be able to capture him, yet he could not afford to run any risks with the other.

Captain Pat's first move was to recover his revolver, which, as the reader will remember, was forced from his hand by the violence of the shock when he was overthrown.

The handcuffs he had retained.

Clendenning had been so astounded by the bold movement on the part of his pal that all he could do was to gaze open-mouthed at his fleeing comrade, but he never even dreamed of attempting to escape himself while the detective was prostrate on the ground.

The moment Captain McGowen recovered his weapon he rushed at Clendenning who drew back in alarm.

"Quick! out with your hands so I can snap the bracelets on!" he cried.

Clendenning obeyed immediately.

The handcuffs were on the wrists in a twinkling.

"Don't stir from here until I come back, or I will be the death of you!" Captain Pat cried threateningly, and then he rushed after Eberhard.

This delay gave the fugitive the advantage of over a block's start, but the bootblack had taken up the chase and was right at Eberhard's heels.

The fugitive was in a tight place, for alarms, sounding from policemen's clubs directly in front of him and at no great distance off, indicated there wasn't much chance of his escaping in that direction.

The man was desperate, though, and did not despair.

In the first place, he felt that it was necessary to get rid of the bootblack sticking, cur-like to his heels.

Drawing his revolver, he wheeled suddenly and with a quick "snap-shot" sent the boy howling to the earth.

Then, just as the revolver-shot broke the stillness of the night, two policemen turned into the street about a thousand yards in advance of the fugitive.

He was in a trap.

There was only one chance for him, and that he was quick to improve.

Just ahead of him was an opening which

led to a pier and through this opening and down the pier he rushed with the speed of a greyhound.

Captain Pat, in the rear of the fugitive, and the officers who had cut off his onward progress, arrived at the entrance to the pier at about the same time.

Captain McGowen had stopped to speak to the boy.

"Are you badly hurt, Patsey?"

"No, sur, but the devil's put a bullet into me leg; it's jist through the outside, sur. I'm not badly hurted, but, begob! I thought I was kilt at first."

And the boy proved that he had only received a slight flesh-wound by scrambling to his feet.

The hurt really didn't amount to anything, for the bullet had only just cut through the calf of the leg.

"Take my handkerchief and bind it up as well as you are able!" cried Captain Pat, throwing the article to him, and then following in pursuit.

At the entrance to the pier he encountered the officers, as we have said.

The bluecoats were inclined to look with suspicion upon the detective officer, for in his outlandish disguise, covered with dust from his downfall, and with his face bleeding from where the hard head of his assailant had cut the skin, the detective presented an ugly-looking picture.

He understood in an instant the meaning of the suspicious glances they cast upon him, and cried:

"It's all right, boys, I am Captain Pat McGowen of the New York detective force, and I'm after a desperate man; he has shot the boy who tracked him and will be apt to make an obstinate resistance if we give him the chance."

There was a certain tone of authority in the way that Captain Pat spoke which immediately convinced the officers that the statement was correct.

"We'll fix the blagg'ard!" cried the foremost officer, lugging out his revolver, and speaking a brogue fully as rich as the one that Captain McGowen had assumed.

"Come on, then!" cried the detective.

Down the pier they ran until they reached the end without seeing a sign of the fugitive.

The slight delay resulting from the explanation had evidently been well improved by the desperado.

At the end of the wharf a small sloop was moored, but as the deck was all clear, with the hatches fastened, it did not seem possible that the fugitive could have found concealment on board of it.

"Mebbe he has been afther jumping overboard and is clinging to one of the spiles of the dock," the Irish policeman suggested.

"Or perhaps the cabin was open and he went in there and fastened it after him," observed the other.

"A moment's examination will satisfy us in regard to that!" cried Captain Pat.

And then all three leaped down upon the deck of the sloop.

But not three steps had any of them made toward the cabin, when the hatch was suddenly opened and a grizzly-haired and bearded mariner, with a face as weather-beaten and rugged as though cut out of a pine-knot, appeared in the entrance, brandishing an enormous revolver.

"Git out of here—git out of here, you durned New York rats, or I'll blow daylight right through ye!"

The old sailor, evidently meant business, and as he had the intruders at a terrible disadvantage, for they were not ready for action, they set up a warning shout.

"Hold on!" cried Captain Pat.

"Hould on, ye murtherin' blagg'ard!" yelled the Irish officer, getting out of the way with a celerity that showed he had a due regard for his personal safety.

"Be careful, or you'll kill some one yet with your foolishness!" exclaimed the other ornament to the force, retreating toward the dock.

"Ki'll! I'll kill 'bout a million on ye if ye don't git off my boat!"

"My blood is up and I'm all for war. I heerd ye prowling round here, trying for to git yer hooks into somethin', for the last half-hour, and now I've got you foul, and I'm going to blow daylight right through ye if ye don't skip out of here, quicker'n a muskeeter kin wink."

The night was not a dark one, nor yet was it light, there was a moon, but it was so veiled with misty clouds that it did not afford as much light as it should have done.

If the aged mariner had not been so excited by the supposed invasion of his boat by river thieves, he undoubtedly would have been able to detect the difference between his present visitors and the ugly customers whom he supposed them to be.

For any one who has ever encountered the ruffianly-looking "rats of the river," as the thieves who prey upon the vessels at the docks

and in the harbor are called, would never be apt to forget their looks.

"We are policemen in chase of a fugitive. Rub your eyes open, old man, and take a look at us," Captain McGowen cried.

And then it suddenly occurred to him that it was his face, which the old sailor had first seen, and when he reflected upon his disguise, and the peculiar appearance which he must present, he did not wonder that the old man had been alarmed.

"Sakes alive! is that so?" and the sailor peered around him.

"Wa-al, two on you seem to be policemen, sure enuff, but for that other chap, if his face ain't enough for to hang him anywhere, then I'm no judge of mutton."

"I'm a detective in disguise," Captain Pat replied.

"But, I say, did you see a man run down on the pier, or hear him?"

"Yes, I did, and I roused up and hunted out my shooting-iron."

"Durn me! if I didn't think you was the same gang though."

Then the mariner came out of the cabin, and as he did so he uttered a cry of alarm.

"My boat—my boat is gone!" he exclaimed.

"Your boat?"

"Yes, it was tied to the stairs."

"Were there oars in it?"

"Nary oar; do you think I'm a fool?"

"That is where our man went and we'll have him yet," Captain Pat cried.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ON THE RIVER.

"No, sir-ee, I'm no fool to leave oars in a boat!" the skipper exclaimed.

"No, sir, you can bet all your wealth on that! I'm no greenhorn, although I am from 'way down in Maine; but I'm an old seaman, I am, and this ain't the first time that I have tied up to a York dock."

"Why, these 'tarnal thieves who hang out 'round these docks would steal the hoofs off of a dead mule and then kick the critter 'cos he didn't have eight legs instead of four."

"We will be able to overtake the scoundrel then if we can get a boat!" Captain Pat exclaimed. "For it is evident that we were so close behind him he hadn't time to look for oars; but just cut the boat loose and pushed out into the tide."

"The ebb has been on for nigh onto two hours now, and it runs mighty fast past this 'ere dock," the old sailor remarked.

"Oh, we can easily overhaul him if we can get a boat and oars," the detective observed.

"I kin find the oars and thar's a boat tied to the pier jist ahead of my craft!" exclaimed the mariner.

Then, while Captain Pat and the policemen hurried to get the boat, the old sailor dived down into the cabin and soon appeared with a pair of oars.

The boat was a small, cranky affair, one of the kind termed a sharpie, and when the sailor made his appearance and surveyed the little craft with its heavy load of human freight he shook his head doubtfully.

"I reckoned I would go along with you fellers; but I dunno 'bout it," he remarked.

"It 'pears to me that you hev got 'bout all the beef into that air boat that she ought to carry, and I s'pose one of you fellers kin pull as well as a man 'bout my size."

"Devil an oar kin I pull, at all, at all!" one of the blue-coats protested.

"I'm a poor fist at rowing," admitted the other.

"Well, I can pull a pretty fair oar; but if we overhaul the fellow I will have something else to do, so you had better come along and attend to the rowing."

"All right, I'm yer mutton, if so be as you say so; but I say, you fellers don't want to fool 'round much in the boat, or else we will all be pesky apt to catch a ducking."

"Faith! we'll be as quiet as lambs!" the Hibernian policeman protested.

"Come, hurry up, for we are losing valuable time!" Captain Pat exclaimed, eager to be after the fugitive.

"All right, all right, we'll be after the cuss in a brace of shakes," the sailor responded, descending into the boat with what seemed to the rest to be an unnecessary amount of caution.

Captain McGowen was in the bow of the boat and the two policemen in the stern.

Adjusting the oars in the oarlocks, the sailor, with the ease of an old and experienced hand, shot the boat out into the river.

"If these deuced clouds would only break away so as to let the moon shine out, we would soon be able to spot the fellow," the detective observed.

"Oh, I reckon we kin find him," the sailor answered.

"Yes, he can't be far off, although, thanks to this delay, he has managed to get a good ten minutes' start of us," the detective remarked, vexedly.

"But he hain't got no oars, you know, and though the tide is running pesky hard, yet it is mighty sart'in he can't git fur off, and the chances air 'bout a thousand to one that we won't miss him."

"I think I see a boat now!" Captain McGowen exclaimed, after some minutes of silence.

The old sailor cast a glance over his shoulder and peered earnestly through the gloom.

"What do you make of it?" the detective asked.

"That is my boat for a thousand dollars, boss!" the skipper replied.

"You kin jest bet all you're worth on that and you won't make no mistake 'bout it either!"

"I jest tell you what it is: you can't fool this old rooster on that air boat, 'cos why? I built the craft myself, and I reckon I would be able to pick out my property anywhar, and that is the reason why I was willing to come along, though it is jest tempting Providence for to put four sich critters as we are into sich a crank of a craft as this hyer eggshell."

"But I wasn't a-going to lose my boat—worth twenty dollars of any man's money—if I could help it!"

"We are going to scoop in our game easily enough, I guess," Captain Pat remarked, as he noticed how rapidly they were overhauling the other boat, which was drifting idly with the tide.

"Oh, yes, thar ain't much chance for a craft without oars for to git away from one with them," the skipper observed, sagely.

"The boat seems to be empty, though," Captain McGowen remarked, a sudden suspicion seizing upon him.

"By Jove! it would be the richest joke of the season if the fellow has fooled us!"

"How fooled us?" asked one of the policemen.

"Why, cut this boat loose and pushed it out into the stream so as to make us think he had escaped in that way, and then hid himself somewhere on the pier."

"Sorra a hiding-place did I see!" the Irish policeman exclaimed.

"Well, neither did I, but still the fellow may have found some hole," the detective replied.

"Nary one on the pier," observed the old sailor.

"I reckon thar ain't no doubt 'bout yer man being inter the boat."

"That you can't see him don't count, 'cos, jist as likely as not, the cuss has stretched himself out in the bottom of the boat, so that any one w'ot got their peepers on it would be fooled inter the idee that thar warn't nobody inter it."

This idea seemed to be a sensible one, and Captain Pat felt satisfied that it was correct, for although he had only made a hasty examination of the pier, yet he was certain that if there had been any hiding-place on it big enough to give shelter to a man it most surely would not have escaped his inspection.

Anyway, a very few moments would settle the matter for they were now rapidly approaching the drifting boat.

Soon the pursuing craft came within a hundred feet of the other, and as the moon was beginning to break through the clouds which had encompassed it the light grew stronger.

"If the fellow is in the boat—as I think he is, beyond a doubt—about this time he ought to be getting anxious, for we are getting dangerously near to him," Captain Pat observed.

The wisdom of the remark none of the rest attempted to gainsay and they all shook their heads approvingly.

"In a very few minutes now we shall know how things are," Captain Pat added.

Truer words were never spoken, for hardly had the sentence escaped his lips when the fugitive arose suddenly to a kneeling posture in the boat, and with wonderful rapidity fired six shots at his pursuers, the shots so close together that one seemed like the echo of the other.

The fellow was evidently armed with a double-acting revolver, as the tool is called, one of the kind that a single pull upon the trigger both raises the hammer and brings it down again.

Captain Pat was provided with a similar weapon, and although he was taken by surprise, for he had not anticipated any such desperate attempt at resistance, yet he would have given shot for shot if he had been allowed so to do.

On this occasion though, fortune seemed to favor the fugitive, for the moment the sound of the first pistol-shot rung on the air, with a howl the Irish policeman sprang to his feet, regardless of the fact that he was in a cranky, overloaded boat.

"Howly Moses!" he yelled, "it's kilt I am! The spalpeen has shot off me ear!"

And this was partly the truth, for the first bullet had clipped a piece from the extremely large ear of the burly son of the Emerald Isle.

"Sit down, you fool; you'll have us over," howled the old sailor.

The caution came too late though, for the

boat was entirely too cranky to permit any such foolishness, and over it went in a jiffy.

In a second all were struggling in the water. As it happened neither one of the policemen could swim, but they had presence of mind enough to grab hold of the boat.

The moment the cranky craft relieved itself of its cargo it righted, but being half full of water, the old sailor understood that it would not be possible for them to get on board of her again.

"Don't try to climb inter her," he continued. "Tain't no use, 'cos it can't be did. You cusses that can't swim hang on to her for dear life, and I'll try to git her inter the dock."

All idea of pursuit of course was out of the question at present.

The first thing was to get the non-swimmers to land.

This was accomplished after considerable trouble, and when the policemen were on the dock, the old sailor managed to bail out the boat, and then he and Captain Pat set out in chase of the fugitive.

Now, understanding fully the desperate character of the man with whom he had to deal, the detective had determined to show him no mercy.

But when the boat was overtaken the unwelcome discovery was made that the fugitive had abandoned it.

He had taken to the water and all trace of him was lost.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE POLITICIAN'S WOOING.

LIKE the lover renowned in ancient story, the best advantage that Judge Goodfellow could boast of in his suit with the actress was that "it went not backward."

Most certainly it did not progress at all.

All the usual means, which generally are successful in winning a woman's favor, had been tried by the judge, but without avail.

Philippa, was a strange, odd girl, and, as the judge remarked, entirely different from any one in the female line whom he had ever encountered.

Presents she did not seem to care for; costly jewelry made no impression upon her, and warned by the strong desire which she had manifested to return the ring, the judge did not attempt to make any further advances in that line.

A favorite method indulged in by the bloods of the metropolis when they desire to make a favorable impression upon any lady in public life, actress, danseuse or vocalist, is to tender them an elegant repast at some one of the high-toned restaurants, but that game would not work with this charming creature.

Resolutely she declined all invitations of this kind and, thanks to the counsel of Miss Blanche Cunningham, who was too old a bird to be caught with chaff, she escaped the cunning little traps which were laid for her, for when the judge discovered that she was not inclined to accept his invitations, he endeavored to secure the pleasure of her company by getting some lady friend to provide the repast, thinking the girl would be tricked by such a device.

In such a cosmopolitan city as New York it was of course an easy matter for a man as well acquainted as the judge to find plenty of ladies, whose social positions were tolerably good, to oblige him in a matter of this kind.

But finding that the girl was not inclined to be at all sociable, the judge at last consulted Miss Diana Duclois in regard to the matter.

He had taken pains to keep on the right side of the burlesque actress, as the well-known saying is.

His nightly floral gifts to her were splendid, and then every now and then a valuable piece of jewelry accompanied the flowers.

Of course Miss Diana was too shrewd a woman not to understand that these gifts were designed to win her good will and were not called forth by any admiration that the gentleman felt for her.

Naturally, however, she was inclined to favor a man who was disposed to act in such a liberal manner.

Therefore, when the judge sought her advice in regard to the young actress, she gave it freely.

"I don't really know what to make of the girl," she admitted, frankly.

"Well, I must say she perplexes me," the judge remarked.

"Yes, she is an odd fish."

"I have seen a good many women in my time, and I thought I understood something about them, but I must confess this girl puzzles me as greatly as though I came from the backwoods, or from some other wild region, where females are few and far between."

"Yes, I thought I understood my sex pretty well, but this girl is different from any one whom I have ever encountered."

"I presume you have noticed the way in which I have worked my little game?" the politician observed, with a smile.

"Oh, yes."

"I thought I was pulling the wires all right, but, somehow, the thing will not work. All my efforts do not seem to have made the slightest impression."

"A shyer puss than this Miss Philippa I do not think I ever encountered."

"She is a strange, odd girl, as I said; there isn't the least doubt about it," the burlesque queen observed.

"Did you ever chance to mention me to her, or to comment on my attentions in any way?" asked the judge.

"Not really directly; I did not think it was wise to do so at such an early stage of the game; but some of the ladies—a little jealous, you know, of the attentions which you have lavished upon her—have seen fit to joke with her about the brilliant conquest which she has made."

"I see, I see; quite natural under the circumstances," observed the judge.

"Yes, the joking was all good-natured upon the surface, you know, although in reality there was a deal of malice at the bottom of it, for there wasn't one of them who didn't wonder at your selecting Miss Edmonds, instead of her own individual self."

"That was natural too."

"Yes, when you consider that they are all trained actresses who think they understand how to make the most of the gifts which nature has bestowed upon them, while she isn't anything but a novice."

"How did she take the jesting?"

"In the most matter-of-fact way in the world. Just as if she had been used to such attention all her life, and I can tell you the jesters didn't make much out of her."

"Then too, she and one of the ladies of my troupe have become great friends, this Miss Cunningham."

"Yes, yes, I have noticed her; a tall, handsome girl, very talented too, one of the best of your ladies."

"No doubt about that; Blanche is a stylish-looking girl, and as accomplished as she is handsome too."

"A very level-headed girl, who knows what she is about; not the slightest bit of foolishness about her, and a better adviser couldn't be found in the city."

"I should imagine so from her looks; she seems to be a self-willed, resolute girl."

"She doesn't belie her looks, and with Blanche to back her, Miss Edmonds manages to get along very well indeed."

"The girl undoubtedly has dramatic talent, although in this minor rôle she doesn't have much chance to show what she can do."

"She is pretty and pleasing, but just how much talent in the acting line she possesses is a question which time alone can solve."

"It is only in the pages of the novelist that the novice suddenly blossoms out as a great star and astonishes the world with the brilliancy of her genius."

"But such things do happen sometimes, don't they?"

"Yes, but hardly once in a hundred years," the burlesque queen sneered.

"Of course it is the easiest thing in the world for the author, who wants to make his heroine win fame and fortune at a single bound, to make her go on the stage and hold the audience spell-bound from the moment she makes her appearance, but it is all bosh, and if the writers knew anything of the time and study necessary to make a success on the 'boards' they wouldn't write such trash."

"The girl does extremely well for a novice, but for any one at the present time to predict that she is ever going to astonish the world as an actress would be utterly ridiculous."

"She may, it is true, and then again she may not, and the second is much more likely than the first."

"If I could only prevail upon her to look with a friendly eye upon my suit, the question of whether she will be successful on the stage or not need never worry her."

"In my opinion the girl is very foolish indeed to allow such an opportunity to escape her," the actress observed in the frankest possible manner.

"Would you mind saying as much to her if you got the chance?" the judge asked, eagerly.

"Indeed, I would not. I am quite willing to help you all I can, and as to getting an opportunity to speak to her upon the subject, I will make one."

As will be perceived from this remark, the burlesque queen was going at the subject in an extremely business-like way.

The politician expressed his obligations in a suitable manner, and the interview came to an end.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE ANSWER.

MISS DUCLOIS was as good as her word, and that very night happening to encounter Philippa

during one of the intermissions between the acts, took advantage of the opportunity to mention the matter.

She began by referring to the beautiful basket of flowers which had been presented to the girl that evening, the usual tribute from Judge Goodfellow.

"Your admirer is on hand in the box to-night, I see, and the flowers arrived promptly on time," Miss Duclois remarked.

"It wasn't a bad investment when I availed myself of your services," she continued, "for I don't think there is any doubt that you draw every night as much money as your salary amounts to weekly."

"I suppose the first thing I know you will be wanting more money."

"Oh, no, I am content, although I shall be very glad when the time comes for you to believe I am entitled to a higher salary," Philippa replied, simply.

"Why, you silly child, don't you know that I shall never be willing to give you any advance, until you compel me to do so by demanding it?" the burlesque queen exclaimed in her hard, cynical way.

"Oh, no, I am not willing to believe that," Philippa responded.

"I am not any better than the rest of the world. I love money as most all mortals do, and am not willing to give away a penny that I can possibly retain."

"But, speaking of your admirer, do you know you have made a conquest worth boasting about?"

Philippa appeared a trifle confused and a shade came over her face.

"This gentleman, Judge Goodfellow, is one of the leading men of the city, very rich, very influential, and a woman lucky enough to attract his eye may consider herself remarkably fortunate, particularly if she is a girl whom the world would consider to be beneath his station in life—an actress, like yourself for instance," Miss Duclois continued.

"Yes, I suppose so," the girl remarked, slowly, and there was a look on her face as though she did not relish the discussion of the subject.

"In fact, from what I know of the gentleman, I feel sure that there are not many ladies in New York who would not feel flattered by the attentions of such a man."

"Let me tell you, my dear, that you have a brilliant chance before you, and you ought not to allow the opportunity to escape you."

"But I do not care anything for the gentleman!" Philippa declared, perceiving that the other expected her to define her position.

"Oh, but that will come in time, my dear child; you mustn't allow any whim of that kind to interfere with your prospects," the burlesque queen declared in her decisive way.

"This is one chance out of a thousand, you know."

"The judge has taken a most decided fancy to you, and if you will only give yourself a chance to enjoy his society you may take a fancy to him."

"How can you tell whether you like the man or not until you find out something about him?"

"That is true; he seems to be a pleasant gentleman enough, but somehow I do not care to make his acquaintance."

"Stuff and nonsense!" declared Miss Duclois, impatiently. "You mustn't make any snap judgments of that kind."

"You cannot possibly decide anything in regard to the man until you come to know him as he really is."

"Come, won't you allow him to make your acquaintance? I will get up a little dinner, or a supper, or something of that kind at my rooms and be there myself to play propriety, so there will not be any reason for your not coming, and you can bring Blanche along with you, too."

"You have confidence in her, if you haven't in me, and she will look out for you."

Philippa immediately disclaimed any idea of fear, but all the satisfaction the burlesque queen could extract from her was a promise to think the matter over.

"Tell Blanche all the particulars, and if she is as sensible and clear-headed as I take her to be she will think about the same way in regard to the matter that I do," was the parting injunction of the actress, who felt extremely annoyed at the ill-success of her endeavors.

At the close of the performance she went to a little supper given by the judge, accompanied by a couple of the ladies of the troupe and escorted by Slippery Archy and the manager, Colonel Richmond.

Taking advantage of a favorable opportunity she related to the judge the particulars of the interview, bidding him at the same time not to be discouraged, quoting the old French proverb, "Everything comes to him who waits."

The judge was in a rather bad humor when he returned to his home, and consequently not disposed to waste much time upon a foreign-looking gentleman, rather poorly dressed, who stepped forward to accost him when he got out of the carriage which had conveyed him to his residence.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE OFFER.

THE hour was late—or to say it was early would be perhaps more correct, for it was between two and three in the morning.

The supper had taken time, but the judge, being a late bird, cared not for that: being a man of leisure, with few cares pressing upon him, he was seldom accustomed to sit down to his breakfast before ten or eleven.

The appearance of the man, though, who had evidently been lying in wait for him, rather annoyed the judge.

As we have said, the stranger had a foreign look.

He was a man about the medium size, with yellow hair worn a little long, and a mustache and pointed chin-beard of the same hue.

To judge from his appearance he was a German, but when he spoke it was in good English, with only a slight accent.

"I beg your pardon, judge, for speaking to you at this unseemly hour," the stranger said, "but I have something important to say to you, and thought it was possible I could gain an audience with you better at such an hour as this than during the day, when other matters occupied your attention."

The man was extremely polite, and spoke in a manner which showed immediately that he was no low, common fellow.

The first idea of Goodfellow was that the man had some evil purpose in view, but as he had not hesitated to make his appearance openly before the driver, and a policeman who was lounging on the other side of the street, it was evident it was not correct.

"I do not think I can spare any time at present," the judge replied, rather shortly.

"Come to-morrow and I will listen to you."

"Pardon me, but I think you will not object to grant me an interview when you understand the nature of my business," the other replied, persistently, but still extremely polite.

"It is in reference to a certain lady who was expected to be present at the supper to-night, but who did not come."

This statement showed such a knowledge of the judge's affairs that it rather made him open his eyes.

"I think I have some information in regard to that lady which you would like to know," the man continued, and the judge's astonishment increased with every word.

Goodfellow was a man noted for his quick apprehension and almost immediately jumped to the conclusion that he understood the stranger's game.

He was some underling connected with the theater who knowing the circumstances attending his pursuit of the young and pretty actress found he could turn the matter to account.

Sometimes such tools did good service, the judge reflected, and so he determined upon granting the man the interview he craved.

Then, too, the judge was not at all sleepy and did not feel in the least like going to bed, this fellow would serve to pass the time away until he did feel like retiring.

The judge was not in the least afraid that the man would attempt to do him harm, for two of the men servants of his household always remained up until he gave them the signal to retire.

In politics Judge Goodfellow had often accomplished important results by the use of low and obscure men, and when the stranger referred to the actress in whose pursuit he—the judge—had been so persistent, the idea had floated across his mind that the stranger would be of service.

It was merely a surmise of course; the judge had no good reasons for so thinking, but as he had been remarkably fortunate in the course of his career in some shrewd guesses of this kind, he was inclined to believe that his instincts were seldom wrong.

"Well, although it is rather an unusual hour to grant an interview, yet as you say your business is important I will comply with your request."

The stranger expressed his pleasure at this in a few well-chosen words, and then Judge Goodfellow conducted the man into the house.

To the servant who was on the watch at the door the judge, in passing, delivered a brief caution in regard to being on the lookout, then he led the way to his office, which was a rear room on the parlor floor.

In its time this snug office had witnessed the hatching of many a cunning plot, the working of which had brought place and profit to the conspirators.

The judge took a chair, invited his visitor to be seated, and when he complied with the request, looked at him inquiringly.

"To begin at the beginning," said the stranger, "my name is Johnson—James Johnson. I am of German extraction, but have lived for some time in this country."

"I will not attempt to conceal from you that for some time past I have been unfortunate."

"Perhaps it is my own fault, perhaps it is not; it does not matter anyway, the fact remains that it is so."

"I am so reduced in circumstances that, at present, I am depending upon the beggarly pit-

tance which I receive at the Bijou Theater, where I am one of the supers, as these theatrical people say. You understand what I mean?"

The judge nodded.

"As you have probably perceived I am a man of character, and of course its galling to my pride to be compelled to lead such a life, but I am a stranger in New York—New Orleans is my home—and being entirely without friends here I am obliged to get along as best I can."

"Of course, root hog or die," observed the judge sententiously.

"Yes, that is the idea. The hog must root or die," the other remarked with a perfectly grave face.

"You Americans, with your strange sayings, go straight to the heart of a matter."

"Well, all I could find to do was the job of carrying a spear at the Bijou Opera House."

"My remuneration is barely sufficient to keep me alive; often in the old times when I had a good portion have I thrown away in a single night ten times as much money as I now receive in a week."

"I presume you have often encountered men like I am before," the stranger remarked, abruptly, with a shrug of his shoulders as he spoke.

"Men who are down in the world, and who seemed to take a melancholy pleasure in telling any one whom they may be able to get to listen to them the tale of how much better off they once was."

"Yes, now you mention it, I think I can remember some instances of the kind."

"No doubt, no doubt, and it is a sheer waste of time, and, therefore, we will have no more of it, but come at once to business," the other remarked, with an air of decision.

"It was necessary, though, for me to explain in regard to my present position so you would understand how it is that I have the knowledge in regard to a certain matter which I possess."

"Yes, yes; I see."

"I am a man of observation—one who uses his eyes and ears, as you can readily perceive, and therefore it is not strange that, being behind the scenes at the theater, I should be acquainted with the fact that you have quite openly manifested your admiration for one of the ladies of the burlesque troupe."

The judge nodded; the speech did not surprise him, for after the man announced that he was employed at the Bijou Opera House, and spoke of a lady, he suspected his visit had something to do with the beautiful Philippa, so he merely nodded as much as to indicate that he thought the explanation reasonable.

"Behind the scenes the ladies talk quite freely to each other," the man continued.

"It is not a difficult matter for a man like myself, who is quiet and attentive, to overhear bits of conversation which are intended to be private."

"The scenes are only canvas covered with paint, and a man on one side can easily overhear what is said on the other, and the parties who are holding the conversation will not be apt to suspect that there is any one within ear-shot."

Again the judge nodded; he could readily understand how such a thing could be.

"I will not scruple to confess to you that it was by design more than accident that I came to play the eavesdropper."

"I am a poor man, anxious to better my condition, and I am not particular in regard to the means."

"When a man is in a hole he is not apt to be scrupulous," the judge remarked, in an encouraging sort of way.

"Very true; well, I overheard a conversation between Miss Duclou, the proprietor of the troupe, and Miss Edmonds."

"Miss Duclou pleaded your cause and in a skillful manner represented the advantages which might be gained if the young lady chose to listen to your suit, but her words, apparently, fell on deaf ears, for they did not appear to make any impression."

This statement, perfectly agreeing with what the burlesque queen had reported, satisfied the politician that the man knew what he was talking about.

"In the troupe Miss Edmonds has a bosom friend, Miss Cunningham; and being satisfied that to Miss Cunningham the lady would be apt to speak freely, I determined to try to overhear any conversation that the two might have."

"A shrewd idea."

"I was fortunate enough to accomplish my purpose, and from the conversation gained much information."

The judge listened with earnest attention.

"Miss Edmonds is not disposed to look with a favorable eye upon your suit."

"She is ambitious and believes she can make a great name—and a great fortune as well—as an actress."

"Miss Cunningham encourages her in this belief."

"That is very natural," interpolated the judge.

"The success which has attended her has

turned her head, and she thinks that the laurel crown of fame is within her grasp."

"So, confident that a great future is before her, she can afford to look with an unfriendly eye upon your suit."

"I can understand such a thing," Goodfellow remarked, reflectively.

"She is young and inexperienced, and her head has been turned."

"Yes, but it will take a deal of adversity to make her know the truth; consequently the prize you seek to win cannot be gained, unless you are willing to wait until the young lady has her eyes opened to the truth, or you are disposed to use other means than persuasion to accomplish your purpose," and as the man finished the sentence there was a meaning look upon his face.

The judge was too old a man of the world not to understand what he was hinting at, and, like the wily politician that he was, determined to make the fellow speak out in the plainest manner possible before he revealed his game.

"I don't know as I exactly understand you," the judge remarked, with an expression of great candor.

"In regard to waiting, I am certainly not willing to wait, for I am not the kind of a man to dance attendance upon a girl for a year or two just because she takes it into her head that she would like it that way."

"Certainly not!" the other declared.

"A man like yourself should be like the sultan in the Eastern tale."

"All you ought to have to do is to choose the lady and throw your handkerchief."

"But, in regard to the other means of which you spoke—what are you driving at?"

This was a plain question, plainly put, but the man did not hesitate to answer it in the frankest manner.

"The ancient Greek said 'when the lion's skin falls short, eke it out with the fox's,' and so I say to you, if fair means will not avail try foul."

"This is bold talk!" Goodfellow exclaimed.

"It is good, sound, common sense though!" the man answered.

"This girl is like a foolish child—she doesn't know her own mind. This Cunningham girl, with her unstinted praise, has turned her head. It will be necessary to remove her from her influence before you can do anything with her."

"Now my plan is an extremely simple one. Do as the Roman youths did with the Sabine girls. Carry her off, make her yours by gentle force and then she will be glad to listen to reason."

"Hold on, hold on!" the judge exclaimed.

"This is a nice sort of a scheme you are proposing! Don't you know that if it didn't work, it would be certain to send all connected with it to the State Prison?"

"Oh, yes, but that is a risk which must be taken," the other replied, coolly.

"I have reflected upon the matter and fully counted the cost."

"I propose to so arrange the scheme that if it fails I alone will suffer, you will not be connected with the matter at all."

"All I require from you is an agreement to pay me a certain sum if I succeed in delivering the lady into your hands, and I will so carefully plan the matter that, regardless of whether I succeed or fail you cannot be implicated."

There was something about the man which gave the judge the idea that he would be able to carry out the scheme which he so confidently proposed.

It was worth the trial at any rate he thought.

"What price do you think this scheme will be worth?"

"That I leave to you," the other replied, with a polite bow.

Goodfellow reflected for a moment upon this certainly fair offer.

"I'll give you five hundred dollars if the thing works, and allow you another five hundred for expenses."

"More than I would have dared to ask!" the stranger declared.

"Hatch your scheme, then come and submit it to me and I will decide whether it is feasible or not."

The other expressed his satisfaction at this arrangement and then took his departure.

Little suspicion had Philippa of this dark scheme.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE TWO FRIENDS.

THE liking which Blanche Cunningham had taken for the aspirant who hoped to climb the steep hill of fame, was the occasion of much wonderment among the other members of the burlesque troupe.

Blanche was a strange, odd sort of a girl, not the kind of a woman to give way to sentiment at all.

"Terribly straight-laced and old-fashioned for a burlesque actress," was the usual comment in regard to her.

After the burlesque queen herself, Blanche was the most prominent of all the ladies of the troupe, being good-looking—really beautiful at night when she had her "war-paint" on—with

a fine figure, an undesirable talent in the profession she had chosen.

Her natural advantages for the life of an actress were great. She had a splendid voice both for singing and speaking, was an expert and graceful dancer, and in addition possessed that indescribable something which made an audience take a liking to her the moment she made her appearance on the stage.

Blanche commanded the highest salary in the troupe, and having for some five years occupied a prominent position was reported to have saved a goodly bit of money, being careful and prudent, and not a spendthrift, as too many of the bright, particular stars of the stage unfortunately are.

A better adviser for such a girl as our heroine was could hardly be found.

The two friends were seated in their room.

They had just returned from the theater at the close of the performance, and had settled down for a cosy chat before seeking repose.

There was something to talk about too, for the wily Judge Goodfellow, in his ardent pursuit of the young actress, had gone on a new tack that evening.

His usual tribute of flowers had been paid to Philippa, and in addition Miss Cunningham had received a magnificent basket of flowers, and attached to the handle of the basket was a box which contained a handsome ruby ring.

Within the box was a scrap of paper, on which was penned the following sentence:

"A well-wisher begs Miss Blanche's acceptance of this trifle as a token of his admiration for her talents."

The burlesque actress had laughed when she read the lines and now at home, after getting comfortably seated in her rocking-chair, she referred to it when she opened the conversation.

"That ring business was very neatly managed," she remarked, "and it shows that the gentleman is a man of brains."

"Instead of the usual string of nonsense about my being the loveliest of my sex or the most brilliant creature who has ever adorned the stage, he puts the gift as coming—not from an admirer, over head and ears in love with my charms—but from a friend who wishes me well."

"Decidedly it was very neatly done."

"You will return the gift, I suppose?" her companion asked, in a reflective sort of way.

"Most decidedly I will not!" Blanche replied, promptly.

"All such things are to me as spoils of war, and, I assure you, I do not feel the least compunction about retaining a gift of this kind any more than I do the flowers which I nightly receive."

"It is all a matter of opinion of course, but it seems so strange to me to accept valuable gifts from utter strangers."

"That is because you are new to theatrical life, and do not understand it."

"When you get to be an old stager you will not be troubled by these delicate qualms of conscience."

The other shook her head, and from the expression on her face it was plain she did not agree with this opinion.

"Oh, yes, you will come to that way of thinking," Blanche asserted.

"You will discover that the reign of the public favorite is an extremely brief one, and that if she is not wise enough to make hay when the sun shines she will be apt to suffer when her glories begin to disappear and the clouds to shadow her path."

"But it seems to me that in accepting such gifts one is acting like a beggar—forgive me if my words are calculated to pain you; I spoke before I thought."

Blanche laughed.

"Now don't trouble yourself about that. I love frankness above all things in this world, and as I am generally a very candid speaker myself, I am not thin-skinned enough to become offended at getting a dose of my own medicine."

"But let me argue the point with you. The beggar asks for alms—he supplicates for them, and the assistance is bestowed upon him for sweet charity's sake, but with us queens of the stage, we don't ask anybody to give us anything, excepting that we make the best of the advantages which nature has bestowed upon us to win the applause of the audience."

Now, if some of the gentlemen, with more money than brains, are desirous of testifying how much they appreciate our talent by bestowing upon us some article of jewelry, why, my creed is that we are perfectly justified in taking such presents, and I do not consider that the giver has any more claim upon us than if he had signified his appreciation of the talent by clapping his hands and shouting bravo!"

"Yes, I suppose you are right, but I should hate to wear any trinkets obtained in such a way, for it would give the donor a chance to say, see! Miss Blank is wearing the diamond ring or the pearl ear-rings I gave her."

"That objection is well put, and I will admit that I shouldn't like to have any such remarks made about me, but the way I usually do is to sell any such trinkets, then no callow youth nor ancient sinner can make any boast about it."

"I did not think of such a plan," Philippa remarked.

"That is the way I do as a rule, but I shall not in this case. This ruby ring is a very pretty one. I don't think I ever saw a ring which pleased me better," and the girl held it up so that the rays of the gas light could fall full upon it, surveying it admiringly.

"Yes, it is very pretty," Philippa assented, pleasantly.

"And as the giver did not put any love nonsense in his letter, and does not pretend to be struck all in a heap with my wonderful beauty and talent, I think I shall retain the ring instead of disposing of it, but for all that I shall not wear it much while I am in New York."

"But I say, Philippa, have you any idea why the ring was given me?" she asked, abruptly.

"Well, I don't know as I have," the girl answered, slowly. "I suppose it is because he admires your acting, and, being a rich man, took the whim into his head to make you a handsome present."

"Oh, no, that wasn't it at all!"

"Why, then?"

"Because I am your friend."

"My friend?"

"Yes; the gentleman is laying close siege to you, you know, and as, so far, he has no reason to boast of his progress, he is anxious to try all possible ways to make a more favorable impression."

"Having made the discovery that you and I are room-mates, and intimate friends, the idea came to him that it would aid his suit if he succeeded in getting me on his side, and that is why he bestowed the trinket upon me."

Philippa smiled and shook her head.

"You don't think it will do him much good, eh?" quoth Blanche, with an answering smile.

"Indeed I do not! If I am not dreadfully mistaken in regard to your character, a dozen ruby rings wouldn't buy you!"

"You are quite right there, and this long-headed gentleman might just as well have saved his money as far as I am concerned," pursued Blanche.

"But I say, Philippa, I have never had a full and free talk with you about the matter. Miss Duclou tried to get my opinion to-night, and although I told her that I really knew nothing about it, I could see she was not inclined to believe me."

"She has been won over to the side of the judge, you know."

Philippa nodded.

"At great length she explained what a splendid catch she thought it was for you—how rich the man was—how influential, and that if you chose to smile upon his suit, you would be treated like a queen."

"He is old enough to be my father," was the girl's scornful comment.

"That settles him, eh?" Blanche exclaimed.

"Oh, yes, I couldn't bring myself to care for him, no matter how wealthy he might be nor how great the life of luxury he might be able to offer me."

"Perhaps there is some one else in the case, too!" Miss Cunningham exclaimed, in her impulsive way.

A faint blush appeared on the girl's face, her gaze was lowered to the carpet for a moment, and then, with an effort recovering her composure, she said:

"Excepting this gentleman who is following me with his attentions there isn't any one else who appears to care anything for me."

Blanche Cunningham was entirely too shrewd a girl to be deceived by this evasive answer.

"I am sorry that your case is so hopeless," she remarked. "It is an awful thing for a girl to fall in love with a man, and yet be uncertain as to whether he cares anything for her or not."

Again the faint blush appeared on Philippa's cheeks.

"Oh, oh! I didn't say anything like that!" she exclaimed.

"I know you didn't, but I understand it all the same. You mustn't try to pull the wool over my eyes, you know. I am too old a soldier—have lived too long in the world to be deceived."

"I confess of my own knowledge I do not know much of the tender passion, for I am one of the strong-minded kind and do not care much for the men."

"I will admit though that there was a time when I was idiot enough to fall in love."

Philippa's interest was at once excited and she pressed her friend to tell her story.

"Oh, there isn't much to tell," Blanche replied, indifferently.

"I come of a pretty good family at home, and my folks were well-off."

"My father was a wine merchant who retired on a comfortable fortune."

"I was an only child and received a fine education, particularly in music, for which everybody said I had great natural talent."

"My father was a great theater-goer and so, from an early age, I was familiar with the drama and its surroundings, and one of my youthful dreams was that some day I would become a great actress."

"Something like myself," Philippa observed, "although all I knew about the stage came from reading, for there wasn't any chances for me to visit a theater."

"Of course I never seriously thought of such a thing; it was only one of those idle dreams which I suppose all children have," Blanche continued.

"When I was fifteen my mother died and six months afterward my father passed away."

"I was an orphan, but not a rich one, as every one—including myself—believed."

"During the last few years of his life my father had become involved in rash speculations which had resulted disastrously, and when his affairs came to be examined after his death, instead of being able to call myself mistress of fifty or sixty thousand pounds, the fortune which it was supposed I would inherit, there was barely a hundred left for me."

"And what was worse, all my relatives gave me the cold shoulder, intimating in pretty plain terms that I must depend upon myself for support."

"How heartless!" Philippa cried.

"It is the way of the world," Blanche replied with a contemptuous shrug of her beautiful shoulders.

"Thrown thus upon my own resources I had pluck enough to try the stage instead of going out as a governess, as my generous relatives advised."

"Of course they set up a great cry about my disgracing myself, and all that sort of thing, but I did not take the least notice of them."

"I had chosen my career, and soon satisfied myself that I had chosen wisely, although instead of making a name as a tragic queen, as I had anticipated, it was in the realms of burlesque I found success. Before my father died I had a lover. When I went on the stage he deserted me in horror."

"And now you have the story of my life, a plain, round, unvarnished tale, compared to yours."

"Yes; but though there is a slight mystery connected with my childhood, I am satisfied it doesn't amount to anything," Philippa observed thoughtfully.

"And now I am going to make a confession, Blanche," she said.

"I have not been as frank with you as you have been with me, for there is an important episode in my life the particulars of which I have not told you."

CHAPTER XXXI.

PHILIPPA'S CONFESSION.

BLANCHE looked a little amazed at this statement, for the girl had been apparently so open in regard to who and what she was that the other had not the slightest suspicion that anything had been held back.

"Perhaps you have some good reason for wishing to keep the matter a secret," she said, in her frank and open way.

"And if that is so, my dear Philippa, you may rest assured that I am the last person in the world to pry into your secret."

"Oh, no; it is only a foolish pride which has kept me silent, and lately I have been thinking I made a great mistake in not telling this gentleman who has so kindly interested himself in my affairs."

"Captain McGowen?" Blanche observed, with a shrewd and earnest glance at the face of the other.

"Yes, Captain McGowen."

And then Philippa again seemed to be embarrassed, a slight blush appearing on her face.

A smile passed rapidly over the features of the burlesque actress.

She thought she understood the meaning of the girl's confusion.

"This detective gentleman has been very kind—has taken a great interest in you. You ought to be very grateful."

"Indeed I am!" cried Philippa, earnestly, and then raising her eyes, she caught sight of the meaning smile upon the countenance of the other.

"There, there, don't let me bother you!" Blanche exclaimed, perceiving that Philippa was confused.

"I am an awful tease, I know, I was born that way, and you mustn't mind it."

"Captain McGowen is very much of a gentleman, and I regard it as an extremely fortunate thing for you that fate brought you together."

"Yes, he seems like an old friend, although he is a comparative stranger."

"When people are fitted by nature to appreciate each other it is not necessary that they should be months in finding it out," Blanche remarked, in her straightforward way.

"I know for my own part that it doesn't take me long to discover whether I am going to like anybody or not."

"In your case, for instance, I took a liking to you the moment my eyes fell upon your face. There was something in your countenance which impressed me favorably at the first glance, and I felt satisfied that we would be the best of friends."

"You see I have firm faith in my instincts in

such a matter, and with good reason, for it isn't one of a hundred times that I am deceived."

"Of course I haven't your experience," Philippa remarked, "and therefore cannot be expected to be so good a judge, but I think that first impressions are usually to be relied upon, and I am sure I attach great weight to them."

"That is the reason why I am so indifferent to the attentions of this Judge Goodfellow."

"Your impressions of him were not favorable?"

"Decidedly the reverse."

"We are agreed on that point, for I did not admire him, while this detective gentleman on the contrary impressed me favorably the moment I set eyes upon him."

"Yes, he seems to be a perfect gentleman, and stranger though he is yet I feel sure that in him I have a friend in whom I may confide," Philippa replied, warmly.

"And that is why I think I have made a mistake in keeping from him a portion of my history."

"Most decidedly you have made a mistake!" Blanche exclaimed, in her impulsive way.

"From such a man you ought not to have any secrets. He is a father confessor, and you must make a clean breast of it."

"But I did not think the matter had any bearing on these desperate attacks which have been made on my life and so I refrained from speaking."

"The incident does not reflect any credit upon me and I was really ashamed to relate the particulars," and as the girl spoke, she colored up to her eyes.

Blanche surveyed her in astonishment.

"Well, well, young woman, what on earth did you do? You are not the kind of a girl to do anything foolish, if I am any judge, for you are an extremely level-headed puss for all your youth and inexperience."

"You give me more credit than I deserve," the other answered.

"All I can plead in extenuation is that I was young and inexperienced, and about all I knew of the world was what I had gained from books."

"But you shall hear my story, and then you can judge whether I ought to tell it to Captain McGowen or keep the matter securely locked in my own breast."

"Go on; I am prepared to sit in judgment!" Blanche exclaimed, in a theatrical way.

"As I have told you, I was brought up by two old maids who kept an academy for young ladies."

"It was quite a large institution and well patronized, and from childhood I was reared with a view to my becoming a teacher when I was old enough."

"I was an apt scholar, and though not treated with any particular kindness by my benefactors, yet still my progress was so rapid that they had little cause for complaint, particularly as I was generally well-behaved and docile."

"At an early age I was enrolled as an assistant in the academy, for when I was twelve I was as proficient in my studies as most girls are at sixteen and seventeen, particularly in music and elocution."

"For eight years I served faithfully without salary, only being provided with my board and clothes and a small allowance of spending-money."

"That was rather mean on their part, it seems to me," Blanche commented.

"I did not object to it, for I considered it only fair that in this way I should repay them for the outlay they had incurred in bringing me up."

"But the very day I was twenty years old an incident occurred which was destined to have a vast influence upon me."

"In place of the old gentleman who came twice a week to attend to the French lessons, his son appeared, a fine-looking young man."

"His father was sick and he came to take his place."

"He was apparently a very quiet, reserved young man, a regular bookworm, and the two old maids, although they were very careful about the male teachers whom they introduced to their pupils, took a fancy to this gentleman, because he seemed to be such an extremely old young man."

"I think I can guess the sequel; he proved to be a wolf in sheep's clothing."

"Yes, he fell in love with me at the first glance, as he afterward told me, and in secret paid me the most devoted attention."

"I was young and (as far as he was concerned) foolish. He was the first man who had ever told me what an angel I was," and the girl's lip curled in contempt as she spoke.

"Of course, like nearly all young girls, I had dreamed that one day a hero would come to woo me, and in my inexperience this man seemed to be the one."

"He told me how talented I was—how foolish that I should drudge out my life in an obscure village when a great world was eagerly waiting to shower its gold at my feet."

"He declared that either on the stage or in the concert-hall I could win both fame and fortune."

"The old, old story!" Blanche exclaimed, contemptuously.

"And he, the discoverer of your talents, no doubt expected to reap a golden harvest therefrom."

"Yes, he was to be my manager. He said he was well acquainted with many prominent people in the amusement line, and that it wouldn't be any trouble for him to arrange for my appearance."

"Oh, yes, theater managers are just dying for novices to make untold gold for them," the veteran actress observed, sarcastically.

"Won at last by his persuasions I consented to elope with him, and one night fled from the academy."

"Young girls will do such foolish things," Blanche remarked.

"You are not the first one who has believed the specious words of an ardent wooer."

"My lover was waiting for me with a buggy. There wasn't the least difficulty in leaving the house, for the two ladies who controlled the school placed the most implicit trust in me, and I, wretched, silly girl that I was, repaid their faith by deserting them without a farewell word."

"My dear child, as I said before, you are not the first who has done that sort of thing."

"Only, as a rule, it is the parents, the loving father and mother, the ones who have done everything in the world for her, when the foolish girl, her brain dazed by the love madness which has seized upon it, deserts, to fly with a man, of whom, half the time, she knows but little."

"This was true in my case, for, apart from the account which my lover had given of himself, I knew absolutely nothing whatever about him."

"It was arranged that we were to drive to the nearest railroad town, which was a village some ten miles off on the other side of the mountains, there we were to be married and then take the Northern train which stopped at this place a little after midnight."

"During the drive, despite the agitation under which I labored, I noticed that my lover acted strangely, but innocent as I was, totally unsuspecting, I never even dreamed of what was really the matter with him."

"We arrived at the minister's house—he had previously been notified of our coming—and he prepared to perform the ceremony."

"But when he learned that we had come without witnesses he said it would be necessary to have some and summoned his wife and his female servant."

"Then the ceremony began, but when the minister put the usual question to my lover as to whether he would take me for his wife, and he answered 'yes,' the moment the servant heard his voice she gave a piercing scream and fainted dead away."

"Go on with the ceremony, never mind her!" cried my lover in a hoarse voice.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE CLOSING OF THE TALE.

"THE minister, who seemed to be a good old man, was shocked at the suggestion."

"No, no, we must attend to this sufferer first!" he exclaimed.

"The servant was a young girl who was quite good-looking, although she was wan and pale and looked as though she had experienced much trouble."

"What do yer want to bother with her for?" demanded my lover, still speaking in the strange, hoarse voice which had puzzled me before.

"Go on with the marriage—we are in a hurry, ain't we, my dear? As for this gal, maybe she's drunk!"

"And then, as though he thought he had said something witty, he turned and laughed in my face."

"His face was quite near me and his breath came full upon my cheek."

"All of a sudden the disgusting truth flashed upon me. He was under the influence of liquor—my idol was only clay, after all."

"A nice discovery for a loving young bride to make!" exclaimed the burlesque actress, so excited by the tale that she ground her teeth together in anger.

"I was so horror-stricken that I stood like one rooted to the spot, not knowing what to say or do."

"Happily I was not called upon to take any action, for there were others there who had more prominent roles to play."

"The girl recovered from her faint almost immediately and there before us all claimed my lover as her husband, who had deserted her in New York a year before, and although he attempted to brazen it out, declaring that the girl was either drunk or mad and that he had never seen her before, yet that her story was true was apparent to us all."

"And as this scoundrel attempted to browbeat the girl his drunken condition became more and more apparent."

"The minister explained this afterward by saying that it was due to the heat of the room."

"The night was slightly chilly and he had

had a fire kindled in anticipation of our arrival, and the change from the cool air outside to the warm room had an effect upon this villain who had laid so dreadful a trap for me."

"Well, I must say that you had about as narrow an escape as I ever heard of."

"Yes, it was the hand of Heaven alone that saved me. Had not chance brought the deserted wife to this little village, eager to get an opportunity to make her bread, this miserable wretch would surely have made me his helpless prey."

"That is true enough, and the strange thing is that such episodes are taking place every day, although when we read of any such thing in a novel, we are apt to exclaim, 'Very interesting, but extremely improbable!'"

"Of course I presume you can understand how all the love which I believed I felt for this wily flatterer vanished on the instant, and in its place came disgust and loathing?"

"Oh, I can understand it!" the burlesque actress cried. "If I had been in your place I think I would have had hard work to keep my nails from spoiling his face, the wretch!"

"He attempted by blustering, to frighten the unfortunate woman, whom he had so cruelly deserted, but the minister showed himself to be a man of sense and resolution, and when he threatened to call in the officers of the law the miserable wretch, who had ruined the life of one woman, and came so near making a wreck of mine, slunk away."

"He ought to have been pursued and brought to justice," Blanche declared with honest indignation.

"So the minister thought, but the deserted wife was reluctant to take any steps in the matter."

"I wouldn't have acted in that way. If I had been so foully wronged I never would have rested content until I had full measure of revenge!" the burlesque actress exclaimed with the air of a tragedy queen.

"I confess I was like the unfortunate girl and only sought to be rid of his presence."

"Thanks to his deep-laid scheme to make me his victim, however, I was cast friendless upon the world. I could not return to the academy and deceive the ladies with any skillfully-devised tale, for the fact of the elopement had been intrusted to a dozen or so of his friends; he told me this during our drive to the minister's residence, and when I ventured to suggest that he had acted imprudently, he laughed and replied that it was not every day that a man got a chance to run away with such a perfect angel of a girl as I was, and so he could not help boasting of his conquest, and in conclusion he remarked:

"I've no doubt it is all over town by this time. I wasn't much afraid of being pursued, you know, for neither of the old tabbies really have any right to attempt to detain you, and the probabilities are that they will be so angry at my carrying you off that they will not attempt to make any trouble."

"At the time it struck me that the remark was a coarse one, and that I had never heard him say anything like it before, but I ascribed it to the excitement under which he was laboring."

"Very natural under the circumstances, but in reality the speech was due to the liquor he had drunk which caused him to partially drop the mask he had been wearing," Blanche observed.

The burlesque actress had met quite a number of well-dressed, specious adventurers of the same type as the man who had so nearly made a wreck of Philippa's life and therefore was not amazed at the girl's recital.

"The fact of the matter was," she continued, "the fellow thought you had talents which could be utilized in a public way, and he flattered himself that he could turn them to account."

"You were to work and he would take the money. I have met with a multitude of such chaps, and twenty at least have tried to entrap me into a marriage, but I have always managed to see through their schemes."

"They invariably pretended to be dreadfully in love with me, but I could see with half an eye that they were more attracted by the large sums of money which I was supposed to gain by my professional exertions than by my personal charms and beauty of disposition."

"There isn't the least doubt that you have correctly guessed his scheme," Philippa replied.

"But, to resume: By my unwise flight I had destroyed the bridge behind me."

"Possibly if I had returned to the academy and begged for forgiveness my error might have been overlooked, and I might have been permitted to return, although now that I take time to reflect calmly over the matter I do not think the ladies would have been willing to receive me, for such an escapade would surely reflect upon the good name of the school."

"They never would have forgiven you!" exclaimed Blanche, decidedly.

"So I believed at the time, and on that belief I acted," Philippa continued.

"The minister and his wife took a warm in-

terest in me and offered to aid me to the best of their ability.

"Of course, as was only natural, they wished to know how it was that I came to be entrapped by this designing villain."

"And you told them the truth, of course!" cried the burlesque actress, full of interest.

"Yes, and it luckily happened I was not absolutely penniless. I had fifty dollars in my pocket, which represented the savings of five years, put by almost penny by penny."

"Then I had a few articles of jewelry, the gift of pupils who had formed an intimacy with me during their stay in the academy, and these I was certain I could sell for twenty-five or thirty dollars more if I had to raise the money."

"Really you were calculating like an old head," Blanche remarked, with an approving nod.

"I accepted the kindly-proffered shelter of the minister's roof for that night, and in the still hours, instead of sleeping, I reflected upon what I had best do, and long before morning came I had marked out a course of action for myself."

"Having left the academy with the idea of becoming an actress, I determined to pursue the idea."

"I knew that the funds I possessed would take me to New York and afford me support after I got there."

"Of course I was utterly ignorant of whether I would be able to get a chance to appear on the stage, but I thought that in so great a city, where there were so many theaters, there must surely be some one manager willing to afford me a chance to show if I had the making of an actress in me, particularly as I was willing to work for the smallest kind of salary."

"Then you didn't come with the idea of astonishing the natives with your remarkable assumptions of Juliet or some other of the great heroines of the drama?"

"Oh, no, I had no such idea."

"But in the novels, you know, that is the way the beautiful heroine generally gets out of her difficulties. She is in poverty and distress. She goes upon the stage and, hey, presto! fame and riches come!" remarked Blanche, sarcastically.

"Oh, yes, I have read of such things, but I didn't believe I was one of those great lights, if I had, rest assured I would not have applied for a position in a blonde burlesque troupe," Philippa responded, laughing.

"But that was where your head was level, as you Americans say. Your good looks and the fact that you happened to strike the fickle fancy of Miss Duclois got you an engagement; otherwise I am afraid you would have tried in vain, for I tell you, young lady, it is not always an easy matter for an old professional to be able to get a chance to earn his bread."

"Now you have heard my story, I am aware that it does not make me appear in a favorable light and that was the reason why I refrain from telling Captain McGowen all the particulars."

"Under the circumstances I think the desire to keep it to yourself was an extremely natural one," Blanche remarked, dryly.

"But, my dear girl, you have made a decided mistake in so doing, for how can you tell but what this scamp is in New York, and desiring to be revenged upon you has instigated these terrible attacks upon your life?"

"Oh, I do not think that it can be possible," Philippa replied.

"The man surely would not be base enough to desire my death simply because I escaped becoming his victim."

"Well, I don't know, a rascal of that kind is up to all kinds of tricks."

"Are you sure that this fiend, who has twice attempted your life, is not the man who attempted to ensnare you disguised?"

"Oh, yes, there is not the slightest resemblance between them, and this assassin too is fully a head taller than the other who is inclined to be short."

"I see, and it is not possible for the two to be the same. Well, now, if you take my advice, you will tell Captain McGowen your story—or, if you feel a disinclination to do it yourself, I will tell him for you."

Philippa's face brightened up and she expressed her approval of this arrangement, and so the first time that the detective called Philippa found a pretext to quit the apartment for a few minutes, and Blanche made Captain McGowen acquainted with the strange tale.

The detective was puzzled, but declared he was glad the story had been made known to him, for some good might arise from it.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

WEAVING THE WEB.

To say that the Southern colonel was delighted when he was rescued from the cellar would be to only mildly state the case.

"By all the gods of war! I believed for a time that I might be destined to die in that hole like a rat in a trap!" he declared to Captain McGowen when the two sat in the old soldier's room in the Astor House.

"You had a narrow squeeze."

"Narrow! well, I should say so! By the skin of my teeth, as it were!"

The colonel had related all the particulars to the detective, and he in turn had informed the old soldier of the preparations which had been made to burn the place over his head.

Veteran warrior as he was Colonel John Andy Jackson fairly shuddered when he listened to the recital.

"Upon my word the death would have been a most horrible one."

"Yes; and if I hadn't arrived just in the nick of time as I did, you undoubtedly would have been in the other world long before now."

Thereupon the veteran felt called upon to rise and shake Captain McGowen warmly by the hand.

"Captain, I owe you my life, and I can assure you it is yours to command. While I live I shall never forget the service, sir, never!"

"Oh, that is all right, colonel; I was acting strictly in the line of my duties, that is all, so don't say another word about it, I beg."

"The question now before the meeting is who put up the job on you? to use the common expression."

"Well, one of the fellows was captured, I believe."

"Yes; but he is nothing but a tool."

"But through him you can get at the principal?"

"Nary time!"

"Is that possible?"

"It is."

"How unfortunate!"

"Yes, that is true enough," the detective observed, with a shake of the head.

"You see, the fact is, in this affair there is a first-class rascal at the helm."

"There isn't the least doubt about it, for the scheme by which you were entrapped was splendidly arranged."

"Oh, yes; I will admit that readily enough," the old soldier observed.

"I was completely taken in and done for; I had not the slightest suspicion that there was anything wrong with the man."

"I must own he completely won my confidence."

"The fellow is a very prince of rascals, and although in this matter we captured his pal, who ought to have been in his confidence, yet, on the contrary, he pulled the wool over his eyes so that he hadn't the least idea of the game that was going on and in which he was taking a part."

"He believed the scheme was to beat the insurance company, and that the house was to be burnt so as to collect the insurance money."

"It was a very transparent blind, of course, but this tool is an inveterate bummer, whose brains have been added by the whisky of which he has partaken so freely, and he never suspected that he was taking part in a murder scheme."

"I see, I see; he was completely fooled!"

"Yes, he never would have had the pluck to have gone into it if he had known the truth, for at the best he is a very chicken-hearted scoundrel."

"But through him couldn't you get a clew to his principal?"

"No, excepting that we learned the name—that is, the name the man bears now; but that is mighty little to go upon, for all of these rascals have as many names as they have fingers and toes."

"And in regard to this fellow's cognomen, according to the best of the bummer's remembrance it wasn't the same name that he knew him by across the water, although, when he told the head rascal so, the other persisted that it was, and said his memory had played him false."

"Oh, this fellow is a genius evidently!" the veteran exclaimed.

"Yes, he is about as smart a rascal as I ever ran across, and, as far as cunning goes, I doubt if I ever met any scoundrel who was his superior."

"Not the least doubt about that, in my opinion."

"The name by which he is at present known is Claudius Eberhard, but this bummer, who is an Englishman called Clendenning, says he is sure that isn't the name he knew him by in England, and then, too, he thinks he is disguised—that he is not near so old a man as he appears to be."

"Very likely, very likely."

"The way Clendenning explains it is that he wouldn't have remembered Eberhard at all, but the two happened to meet one night in a low drinking-den down in Water street, when Eberhard called the bummer by name and asked him if he didn't remember meeting him in London, at the same time inviting him to take a drink."

"Clendenning's pockets were empty and he was dreadfully dry, and under those circumstances it is probable that he would have been willing to acknowledge an acquaintance with anybody who seemed to be good for a drink, although he admits that he thinks he did meet the man across the water."

"Very mysterious indeed!"

"Yes, for though we have the accomplice, we haven't the least clew to the principal."

"But can this man be justly called the principal?" the old soldier asked.

"Is not the one who stands in the background and sets the other on properly the principal?"

"There is but one person in the world, you know, who could have furnished the information which this man possessed and which led me into the trap."

"Your wife?"

"Exactly!"

The detective was silent for a few moments deeply engaged in meditation, and then he raised his head and said:

"In my opinion there isn't the least doubt that the blow came from her."

"And she is the burlesque actress—this Diana Duclois as she now calls herself."

"Softly, softly, not so fast," the detective continued. "As I have said, there cannot be much doubt in regard to the hand which dealt you the blow, for one person only in this world can have a great desire to know that you are dead, and that, as you have said, is the wife who deserted you years ago; but as yet there is not the least proof, beyond your suspicions, that your erring wife and this burlesque actress, Diana Duclois, are one and the same."

"Very true—not the least doubt that you are in the right; surmise is not proof."

"It is not generally accepted in a court of law as such, and for that end we are working of course."

"I have already taken the precaution to put a watch upon Miss Duclois, just as I put a watch upon you, and it was a lucky thing for a gentleman about your size that I did so, or otherwise you would have been a goner."

"Decidedly," the colonel cried. "If it had not been for your spies who carried to you the intelligence of the trap into which I had fallen, long before this time I would have perished most miserably."

"I think the chances are great that the blow did come from this burlesque actress."

"You have not threatened any one else; if Diana Duclois is not your wife, and she is here in New York there is not the least reason in the world why she should want to attack you as long as you have not discovered her."

"The theory on which I have been working is that this Miss Duclois is your wife, and that when she found you were determined to claim her, and was likely by so doing to make her trouble, she would, in her desperation, endeavor to do you harm."

"The attempt has been made, and so I felt pretty sanguine that Miss Duclois is at the bottom of it."

"Able reasoned, my dear captain," exclaimed the veteran, "and I must admit that I do not see any flaw in your argument."

"Now the point is to connect this man, Eberhard, who attempted to murder you, with the woman who alone has cause to wish such a deed accomplished."

"That's true enough, for, apart from her, I don't think I have an enemy in the world," the colonel observed.

"I have had little trifling differences, of course, with a dozen men in my time, but for the past five years I don't think I have exchanged a harsh word with a single living creature."

"If he is her agent most surely, sooner or later, they will come together."

"Undoubtedly!" cried the veteran, who was following the words of the other with the closest attention.

"Now, then, the watch on her must be so complete that it will be a clear impossibility for this Eberhard to gain admission to her presence, either by day or night, without my spies being aware of the fact, no matter how skillfully and carefully he may be disguised."

"I see, I see!" the colonel exclaimed, rubbing his hands together, gleefully, taking as much interest in the planning of the campaign as though it was for an expedition in the field.

"But, I say, captain, will not this be an extremely difficult task?"

"Most decidedly, and the more so owing to the lady's profession."

"A police spy, if he is experienced, energetic and fully interested in his business can penetrate almost anywhere, but to gain an entrance into a popular theater so that he will be able to play the spy upon any one engaged behind the scenes is about as difficult a job as can be chosen."

"So I should think, although I haven't much knowledge of the theater as it is behind the curtain."

"But in this case, thanks to my acquaintance with the manager of the Bijou Opera House, Colonel Richmond, I think the thing can be arranged."

"You understand that in all cases of this kind, unless the detective can manage to keep the party whom he is to watch from suspecting that a spy is in the neighborhood, all his labor will be in vain."

"Oh, yes, of course."

"I will attend to the matter the first thing in the morning, and you can rely upon my word that the watch I will put upon her will be so complete that not a single soul will be able to gain speech with her either by day or night without my finding out who the party is."

"I see, I see; and so even if this scoundrel visits her in the most complete disguise—"

"My bloodhounds will be upon his track the moment the interview is ended."

"Captain, I feel sure that in the end you will run the game to earth!" the old soldier cried in a tone of conviction.

"Well, if I do not succeed it will not be for the want of trying."

And with this assurance the interview ended.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SETTING THE MOUSE-TRAP.

BRIGHT and early in the morning Captain Pat was at his office.

The pride of the experienced detective was aroused.

He felt that in this unknown scoundrel, upon whose trail he was prepared to press so hotly he had a foeman worthy of his steel.

And this made him exert himself to do his "level best."

The moment he reached his office he set the wires in motion and summoned a round dozen of the best "shadows"—police spies, both male and female, who were to be found in New York.

Captain Pat was an old hand at the business, and there wasn't a single detective in the city who knew the shadows and their capabilities better than he.

Of course after the summonses were sent off it would take some time for the people to get to the office, so instructing one of his subordinates to receive them as they came, Captain McGowen put on the disguise of an old Irishman, and sallied forth into the street.

So complete was the disguise that even the most intimate acquaintance of the acute detective would most certainly have failed to recognize the gallant captain in the white-bearded, decrepit old Irishman, creeping, snail-like along.

The captain had his object in assuming that particular disguise.

It was his intention to make a complete survey of the surroundings of Miss Diana Duclois's abode, and in the guise of a feeble old Irishman, taking a morning stroll for the benefit of his health, and who, owing to his lack of strength, was obliged to sit down and rest every now and then, he would be able to accomplish his purpose without anybody suspecting him.

The burlesque queen occupied a flat on one of the numbered up-town streets near Broadway.

The house was one of the model institutions on the French plan, eight stories high, with a family on each floor.

No low-priced apartments these flats, for they were fitted up with all modern improvements, and commanded fully as much rent as the average three-story, old-fashioned house.

Miss Duclois had been lucky enough to find a flat already furnished, so all she had to do was to move her trunks in, provide the linen and the silver—everything else was found—and set up housekeeping.

As it happened the first flat of the building—Miss Duclois occupied the second—was also to rent, furnished, too, as was set forth in a neat little bill—no gaudy sign—in the entrance-way.

"Oho!" muttered the detective when he made this discovery.

"I fancy this flat will find a tenant before the day is many hours older."

Captain Pat, with his usual acuteness, had perceived what a capital place the first flat would be to establish a spy.

Any one in the first flat could keep a watch upon every soul who either entered or left the house.

"There will not be any need to post any one on the opposite side of the street to watch the door, but I must secure a room there somewhere, from which by means of a good opera-glass and an apparently-closed blind, a keen-eyed spy will be able to command a view of Miss Duclois's front apartment."

Here again fortune seemed to smile upon the bloodhound of the law.

Directly opposite was a five-storied, brown-stone-front house, and from the little written slip affixed to the wall by the side of the entrance, it was apparently a boarding-house.

"All the curtains were up with the exception of the hall bedroom on the second floor."

The keen-eyed detective immediately noticed this fact.

"A dollar to a cent that it is an unoccupied room!" he exclaimed, "and if it is so, it too will soon have an occupant; a highly respectable middle-aged lady, who is obliged to come to New York to attend to some law business relative to the estate of her deceased husband, and the only thing remarkable about her is a pair of eyes which would match a hawk's for keenness of vision."

"Come, decidedly, we are getting on, and now having settled the plan of the campaign in the front let me see what the rear looks like."

Then the detective made his way around to the street which ran in the rear of the palace-like flat.

He had paced the distance from the flat to the corner of the street, and then when he went up Broadway to the street above—the flat was on the upper side of the street—it was an easy matter for him, by counting his paces, to halt at the house which was directly in the rear of the flat in which the detective at present took such an interest.

"By Jove!" exclaimed the disguised bloodhound as he halted in front of the house, which was an old-fashioned two-storied brick building, "fortune is most assuredly standing my friend in this adventure!"

And the reason why Captain Pat thus expressed himself was because he had discovered that the house was empty.

A "To Let" bill adorned the front of it, and when the detective glanced at the announcement, he made the discovery that the agent who had charge of the house was a particular friend of his.

"Aha, this simplifies matters," Captain Pat remarked. "For there will not be the least difficulty in getting his permission to put a watcher into the building."

"And when that is done I think we will have Miss Diana Duclois and her visitors under pretty close inspection."

"If any one succeeds in getting into, or out of, the house without my knowledge they will have to be sharper than the majority of the rogues whom I have encountered in my time."

And now, having secured all the information he desired, the detective took his way back to his office.

The "shadows" had nearly all arrived, and Captain Pat instructed his assistants how to dispose of them.

An imposing, foreign-looking gentleman, who looked for all the world, with his iron-gray ringlets, bristling mustache and imperial of the same hue, like a French general, accompanied by his wife, a pleasant-faced, comely, buxom English-like dame, armed with a letter of introduction from Captain McGowen vouching for his being worthy of the highest credit, was dispatched to secure the vacant flat.

The agent, who had charge of the letting of the apartments, was charmed with the appearance of the distinguished-looking couple, and when they immediately put down the first month's rent in advance, without showing any disposition to haggle over the price, he congratulated himself upon the good fortune which had sent him such desirable tenants, and even went so far as to remark that there wasn't really any need of the letter of introduction, for a man like himself, used to dealing with all sorts of people, could see at a glance that they were a couple whom any landlord in New York might be proud to secure as tenants.

The pair bowed at the compliment but otherwise did not appear to be affected by it.

In fact, they conducted themselves like people who were so used to such remarks as to take them as a matter of course.

Being put in possession of the keys they departed, and in thirty minutes were domiciled in the "first flat" of the palace-like apartment house.

And at just about the same time that the couple were in conversation with the agent, a thin-faced, extremely bright-eyed, middle-aged lady, dressed entirely in a neat black suit, plain, but eminently respectable, wearing a widow's weeds, made her appearance at the brown-stone front boarding-house which was situated directly opposite to the flat occupied by the burlesque actress.

She brought with her a letter signed by one of the first lawyers in the city vouching for her standing and respectability.

But, as in the case of the couple who had hired the flat, any one could see at a glance to just what class the lady belonged.

Her story was a simple one.

She was from the country—called to New York by legal matters in regard to the estate of her late husband, and obliged to take up her quarters for a brief time in the city.

The lawyer who had charge of her affairs had told her that some friends of his had recommended the boarding-house in the highest manner, and he therefore advised her to make arrangements to take up her quarters there while she remained in New York.

The boarding-house keeper, who was also an elderly widow, was delighted to know that her house was favored by words of commendation from so great a man as the lawyer whose letter the stranger bore.

So there wasn't the least difficulty in the stranger securing the cozy hall-room on the second floor, particularly as she produced a well-filled pocketbook and promptly paid a week's board in advance.

"My late husband always insisted upon my being prompt and accurate in all money matters," she observed.

The lady was duly installed in the hall bedroom, then went forth for the purpose of obtaining an expressman to get her trunk which she had left at the dépôt, as she explained.

She was back again in half an hour and took possession of her room.

"I've a heap of writing to do," she remarked, showing that the good-sized sachel she carried was full of legal-looking documents, "and I shall have to stick closely to my room until I get the work done."

"My husband was a contractor and left a deal of unfinished business, and I intend to make his debtors pay up if I can, although I suppose I will be cheated out of a good deal of money, being only a poor, lone widow, but I have some good friends though, who will do all they can for me."

After this explanation, that the lady remained in the seclusion of her own apartment excited no remark.

But undoubtedly the inmates of the boarding-house would have thought it strange if they could have seen what the widow really did after she locked the door of her room and threw a towel over the keyhole so that it was impossible for any one in the entry to play the spy upon her if they had been so disposed.

First she drew in the blinds so as to hide her movements from the observation of any one on the opposite side of the street, then from under the legal-like papers in her sachel she drew a pair of powerful opera-glasses and under the cover of the blinds leveled them at the apartments occupied by the actress.

And just at the time that this was going on a similar performance was taking place in the rear of the apartment-house, excepting that the person who was keeping watch with a pair of powerful glasses of the burlesque queen's apartments was a middle-aged man.

Another strange fact was, too, that although the street as a rule was free from beggars, two of them saw fit to take up their quarters in it this particular day.

One was an old man with a handful of lead-pencils which he stretched out in mute appeal to the passers-by; he took a seat on a doorstep two doors above the house wherein Miss Duclois's flat was situated.

The other was a middle-aged woman, whose stock in trade consisted of some bundles of matches, and she was on a doorstep three doors below the house.

CHAPTER XXXV.

WARNED BY INSTINCT.

IT is an old saying that beggars hunt in couples, and it certainly looked as if it might be so in this case, although the two had come into the street from an opposite direction, and did not appear to be aware of each other's presence.

About an hour after the two beggars—for such of course they were, their pencils and matches being merely a blind to throw dust in the eyes of the police—made their appearance in the street, a policeman came sauntering by, making his accustomed round.

He came up to the beggars before they were aware he was in the neighborhood.

The policeman frowned sternly.

"Ain't Broadway good enough for you?" he exclaimed.

"Come! you had better moosey out of this, and you had better keep yer eyes peeled and git off my beat or I'll run you in the first thing you know!"

The mendicants were too old birds not to be aware of the folly of attempting to argue with authority when clad in blue and ornamented with brass buttons.

So, contenting themselves with a whine that they wasn't "doin' nuffin'," the two shambled off, one going up the street and the other down.

The policeman went on his way, the able representative of conscious authority.

The street being a quiet one he seldom patrolled it but twice a day, giving all his attention to the great thoroughfare, Broadway, where his presence was more likely to be needed more times in an hour than in that quiet neighborhood in a month.

The beggars, too, were seemingly aware that they were not likely to be troubled again by the officer for some time, for within ten minutes after they had been sternly bidden to depart, and had apparently obeyed the command, they were back again in their places, just as if no stern satellite of the law had threatened to run them in if they did not make themselves scarce.

As it happened, this was a lazy day with the burlesque queen.

There wasn't any business requiring her presence at the Opera House, and so she did not rise until after ten o'clock, and it was eleven before she got through with her breakfast.

Slippery Archy, who occupied a room of the flat, partook of the meal with her and the astute speculator noticed that Miss Duclois seemed strangely out of sorts.

And this he did not understand, for the conversation that the two indulged in at the breakfast table was of a particularly enlivening sort.

It was in reference to the wonderful success which the burlesque troupe had achieved in the metropolis.

"Upon my word it is really astonishing the way the business holds," the speculator remarked, with an air of great satisfaction.

"Colonel Richmond tells me that as far as he can learn the business is up to anything that was ever done in the city."

"Just think of it, my dear, the audience nightly is only limited by the capacity of the house."

"Wouldn't it make 'em stare across the water if some of the downy fellows there, who think they 'know it all,' could get a look at our returns?"

"Yes, I think it would," the actress observed in an absent sort of way, and as if she took but little interest in the subject.

"Why just remember what we used to think was great business even in London!"

"A hundred p'un's a night was not to be sneezed at, and when we got to a hundred and fifty we thought we were 'milking' the town, and so we were, too, for that is big money over there."

"Yes, very few ever succeed in doing anything like that."

"And a hundred and fifty p'un's, you know, is only about seven hundred and fifty dollars of the money over here, don't you see, and when you consider, my dear, that we hav'n't had a house yet that hasn't run over a thousand dollars, why, the result is perfectly astonishing!"

"We hav'n't anything to complain of so far as our success is concerned."

"And the best of the joke is that the thing is likely to continue."

"When you get a good start in New York, you know, with a show of this kind, if you are careful to introduce new things all the time, a year's run can be reached."

"That would be 'a consummation devoutly to be wished,'" observed the burlesque queen, quoting the words of the immortal bard.

"Yes, a year would give us more money than we would know what to do with. We can retire from the boards and, like sprigs of nobility, buy an estate somewhere and hold up our heads with any of the swells in the county."

"Oh, no, I shall never retire from the stage until compelled to by old age," the actress remarked, decidedly.

"I couldn't live without the excitement."

"If I were to bury myself in the country I believe I would die in about a year. No, no, I'll act as long as I can and then when I retire you can get my grave ready as soon as you like."

The speculator shivered slightly.

Slippery Archy, with all his devil-may-care assurance and audacity, was noted for one strange thing.

He never liked to hear anybody talk about dying, and a reference to the tomb always gave him the cold shivers.

"Don't talk that way," he exclaimed.

"It isn't nice, you know."

"Oh, I forgot what a coward you are in regard to such matters," she observed, her lip curling in contempt.

"Well, I think the subject is a deuced unpleasant one, and it is a mystery to me why any one should ever want to talk about it."

"Tastes differ, you know. Your opinion is not that of all the world."

"Now you dread the subject as you would poison, and if you had your way would never allow any discussion of the matter in your presence, while to me there is a morbid pleasure in looking forward to the time when I will be laid away in the quiet tomb and all this earthly struggle will be at an end."

Slippery Archy pushed his plate away from him with an air of disgust.

"See here, you know, if you are going to keep on talking in this way, I am going to get out—vamosé the ranch, as they say here in America."

"If you can't find any more cheerful subject to talk about I will relieve you of my company, for you'll give me a fit of the blues, and, in my opinion, it is bad enough to have them when things are going wrong, it is a downright shame to give way to such a thing when everything is lovely and the money is tumbling in."

And then in order to revive his spirits the speculator filled a goblet half-full of wine and drained it at a swallow.

After a fashion common on the continent of Europe the pair had wine on their breakfast-table.

The draught of wine had a tendency to make Slippery Archy feel "braced up a bit," as he would have expressed it.

And then he fell to cross-examining his companion.

"I say, Diana, my tulip, what the deuce has got into you this morning, anyway?" he asked.

"Oh, I don't know," the woman replied, half-angrily, as though she resented the question.

"But, I say, don't you know, this 'ere ain't the proper sort of caper after all."

"You mustn't give way to such fits."

"If you do, the first thing you know you will be making a donkey of yourself."

"There must be some reason for this sort of thing, you know."

"No, no reason, excepting that I feel dull and low spirited."

"Yes, but there must be a reason for that, you know," Slippery Archy persisted.

"No, there isn't," she answered, shortly.

"Haven't you had experience enough with women to understand that they are not reasonable beings, and must not be held accountable to the laws which govern men."

"I am low-spirited—because I am low-spirited, and that is all there is about it."

"Yes, I am aware by sad experience that women are extremely peculiar creatures," the speculator remarked, with a grimace.

"And I trust you will pardon me if I remark that of all the odd females I have ever encountered, you are by several degrees the most peculiar."

"I don't dispute it," she rejoined. "I suppose I am, and I have been through enough in this world to make me so."

"But you ought not to give way to these odd ideas," he urged.

"I can't help it!"

"These strange fits of despondency come over me, and for the time I can no more shake them off than I can fly."

"A presentiment has seized upon me that evil threatens—danger is in the air, and I am seldom deceived when I feel as I do now."

Slippery Archy looked astonished.

"Upon my word you amaze me!" he exclaimed.

"From what source do you anticipate danger and in what shape will it come?"

"Oh, I can't tell you that! I am not a prophet, you know. All I can say is that I have a presentiment that evil threatens me, but in what shape it will come, or from what quarter, I know no more than you do."

"A deuced unpleasant thing, a presentiment of that sort, I should say."

"It merely makes one uncomfortable without doing any good, don't you see?"

"Oh, no; you are wrong there. The presentiment warns me to prepare for danger and make ready to meet it."

"It serves to tell me to be on my guard."

"It is like the little wind-cloud in the sky which bids the watchful and experienced mariner make ready to meet the tempest of which it is the harbinger."

By this time the pair had finished their breakfast, and they rose from the table and sauntered into the parlor which was the front apartment of the flat.

Hardly had they seated themselves when Miss Duclou's maid came with the intelligence that there was a man at the speaking-tube who said he had come to measure the room for new carpets.

In the "French Flats," a speaking-tube leads from the main hall to each apartment in conjunction with the bell, so that when any one applies at the main door the party is enabled to communicate directly with the occupant of the flat without putting them to the trouble of descending the stairs.

It is an ancient French joke in regard to the French Flats that although the speaking-tube is supposed to be for the accommodation of the parties who occupy the apartments, in reality they are for the express use of the small boy of the period who amuses himself by ringing the bell, and when the owner inquires what is wanted is jocosely told to "Go and put yer head in soak!" or some other advice of the same jovial nature is tendered.

"New carpets, eh?" observed Manwaring with a critical glance at the well-worn floor-covering.

"Yes; the agent promised to have them put in as soon as possible. If he had not I would not have taken the flat."

"New carpets are sadly needed," Slippery Archy remarked.

There were two men, rather dull, stolid-looking fellows, who went about their business in a mechanical sort of way.

They made a complete thing of the job, measuring every room in the house.

Miss Duclou, while not appearing to pay any particular attention to the actions of the men, yet watched them closely.

When their work was ended they took their departure; but hardly had the door closed behind them when the burlesque queen, grasping the speculator's arm, cried:

"Those men are no harmless workmen, but a couple of spies!"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE STRANGER.

THE announcement was so entirely unexpected and took the wily Hebrew so completely by surprise, that he stared at Miss Duclou for a moment as though he believed she had taken leave of her senses.

She understood his thought well enough, and immediately exclaimed:

"Oh, I am not crazy, although you look at me as if you believed I was!"

"But the idea seems to me so absurd!"

"It is the truth though. These men may have come from the agent of the building, but they are spies all the same, although he, too, may be deceived and not know it."

"Under the pretense of ascertaining the measurements they have been able to examine

every one of my apartments, and unless they had gained admission by some such device they would not have been able so to do."

"But the motive for this?" Manwaring exclaimed.

"You know, my dear girl, that no one would go to all that trouble without a motive."

"Oh, it is impossible for me to tell," she answered with careless contempt.

"Of course there was some motive for the trick. It is more than possible that that old lunatic who claimed me for his long-lost wife is at the bottom of it."

"One thing I am sure of though, and that is no one has gained anything by the trick, for as there isn't anything here for any one to discover, no discoveries could possibly be made."

"That is sense, sure enough."

After a few more words of unimportant conversation the speculator took his departure, leaving the burlesque queen a prey to most unpleasant reflections.

She had not fully confided in Slippery Archy—she had not revealed to him how deep were her apprehensions, but now that she was alone she became the prey of the most gloomy thoughts.

"I can feel that I am rushing onward to my fate with terrible rapidity—an invisible web is closing around me; I cannot see the meshes, but soon I will feel them when it is too late to break through the snare."

And while the burlesque queen was giving utterance to these "wild and whirling words," Slippery Archy was descending the stairs, puzzling over the—to him—totally unaccountable behavior of Miss Diana Duclou.

"Can it be possible that my angel has yielded to the temptations of the flowing bowl?" he muttered, with the usual tendency of vulgar minds to think the worst of any one.

"Is she 'throwing in' brandy and soda on the sly, or yielding to the fascination of 'blue ruin,' good old London Dock gin?"

"'Pon my soul! it looks like it, otherwise why these tears?"

When he reached the outer door he found the buxom lady of the first flat deep in conversation with a clerical-looking individual with lanky black hair, smoothly shaven, and dressed in a dark suit, much the worse for wear, who appeared like a clergyman, or scholar in distress.

The party had an extremely fine edition of Shakespeare in six volumes, elegantly bound and illustrated, and in good order, which he was endeavoring to sell to the lady.

He said frankly that he was a stranger and in distress, endeavoring to raise money so as to reach his friends who were in Boston.

Slippery Archy pricked up his ears.

Here was a chance for a bargain, particularly as the buxom lady said that she really hadn't any use for any such things, no matter how cheap they were.

The speculator remembered that Miss Duclou had let fall a chance observation the day before that she must get a nice copy of Shakespeare's works to put on her center-table in full sight of all visitors, so that they could go away and report that though she was a burlesque queen, yet she was a devoted student of the glorious Bard of Avon.

So when the serious-looking gentleman was wrapping up his books preparing to depart, seemingly utterly discouraged by his ill-luck, the wily speculator, with a polite bow to the "lady of the first flat," addressed him, said that the celebrated actress, Miss Diana Duclou, now meeting with such success with her troupe of imported blonde beauties at the Bijou Opera House—Slippery Archy never allowed an opportunity to advertise his "show" to slip by him—and who resided on the next floor, no doubt would be glad to look at his books with a view to purchasing them, for the mania she had for collecting editions of Shakespeare—whom she fairly worshiped—was really wonderful.

A hopeful expression appeared in the eyes of the stranger, and he thanked the Hebrew in a grateful manner.

"Here's my card, tell her I sent you up."

Then Slippery Archy departed, the serious-looking gentleman ascended the stairs and the buxom lady retreated to her flat.

Her military-appearing husband sat tilted back in a rocking-chair with a cigar between his teeth.

"Well, Sal, did you strike anything?" he asked, his tone now a most decided contrast to his usual dignified manner.

"No, Bill, nothing, only a half-starved literary cuss trying to sell some books."

"Ain't it a plant—the old game, you know, last book I've got, so help me Bob! and a pal 'round the corner with a carpet-bag full?"

"Oh, no, this fellow is honest enough. No 'get-up' about him."

"Well, well, the fish will come if we wait long enough."

"It must be a big one or else Captain Pat would never take all this trouble to land him."

"No doubt of it, but with the Greencoat Detective there's no such word as fail."

"The captain is game to the backbone, and sticks to his man like an alligator to a dead nigger."

"It may take some time, but Captain Pat McGowen always 'gets' there, all the same."

These two, man and woman, bore the reputation of being a pair of the most expert "shadowers" that the metropolis could boast.

He must be an expert criminal, indeed, and his disguise perfection itself to be able to deceive such experienced trackers.

So when they pronounced the book man to be the genuine article and no sham, there wasn't a detective in the city who would have ventured to question the judgment.

"But things are not always as they seem," to borrow a line from the late lamented Pinafore, and the judgment of the shrewdest of mankind is sometimes at fault.

The husband had examined the stranger from the covert of the window blind when he had applied for admission, and given it as his opinion then that there wasn't any harm in him, and the wife, after her interview with him, came to the same opinion.

But now, using the author's privilege, we will allow the reader to see what took place when the man sought Diana Duclou.

He knocked at the door, the maid answered. To the girl he gave Slippery Archy's card and said that the gentleman had sent him up to see Miss Duclou in regard to buying his Shakes-

peare.

Conducted to the presence of the burlesque queen, he immediately proceeded to business.

The maid lingered for a moment, curious to know what the man wanted, and then departed to tell her fellow-servant that there was a stranger in the parlor who must be dreadfully "hard up," for he was trying to get Miss Duclou to buy some books of him.

The gentleman had deposited the books on the center-table, and, at Miss Duclou's request, had taken a chair on one side of it, while she sat on the other.

He had opened one of the volumes to show how finely it was illustrated, and on the door closing behind the girl he was saying:

"Yes, my dear madam, nothing but the absolute need that I am in for money induces me to part with these valuable books"—here the door closed behind the servant.—"You will perceive that the edition is an excellent one, binding superb and illustrated by some of the best artists living."

And at this moment the man came to a dead stop—a peculiar look came into his eyes, and he appeared to be listening intently.

Miss Duclou stared in amazement, unable to account for the strange behavior.

"Excuse me," he said, dropping his voice to almost a whisper, "is there any danger that one of your servants or any one else who may be in the house will play the eavesdropper upon us?"

All of a sudden the eyes of the burlesque queen were opened.

"Great heavens, is it possible, Eberhard?"

"Yes, and a mighty deal of trouble I have had to come here too—but are we safe from observation?"

"Oh, yes, there isn't any one in the house but the girls, and I never knew one of them to play the spy yet."

"We can sit as we are, apparently examining the books, and if we are careful in regard to the tone in which we speak, even if one of the women should try to spy upon us, which is a most unlikely thing, they would only have their labor for their pains."

"But wherefore all this caution—why this elaborate disguise?"

"Because I have one of the worst blood-hounds in the country on my track—a fellow named Captain Pat McGowen, and he is after me with all the ferocity of a bull-dog."

"I have heard of him—he bears a high reputation."

"He has struck the scent too, and if I am not careful will be apt to run me down."

"I struck a blow at the old man last night—"

"You mean the Southern colonel?"

"Yes."

"And I warned you not to!"

"Well, I didn't believe you meant it. I thought it would be doing you a service if I got him out of the way, and then, maybe, you would overlook the past and allow me to be near you again."

"The game miscarried, thanks to the interference of this cursed detective, and I came near falling into his hands."

"As it is he had got the idea that you and I are in league, and your house now is watched by a legion of spies."

The breath of the burlesque actress came thick and hard,

"Miserable madman, you will be my ruin!" she hissed, hoarsely.

The man crouched under the accusation like a beaten cur.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A DEEP AND DANGEROUS SCHEME.

THE eyes of the woman fairly blazed with fury as she gazed at the man.

"I warned you not to do it!" she repeated.

"Miserable wretch! why did I not leave you in the mad-house—what mistaken mercy was it

that made me think you had sufficiently recovered your senses to be trusted at large?"

"But my head is all right now," he exclaimed, eagerly.

"I know I have queer fits sometimes, and strange ideas—but I am all right—all men have strange streaks, sometimes."

"These desperate schemes of yours are plotted with the cunning of a lunatic!" the burlesque queen declared.

"And that is the reason why you have been able to escape. If you had been in possession of your senses you would have surely been captured."

"You must take care of yourself, for the doctor said when you were released, that you would probably remain all right unless you yielded to some sudden and great excitement, and in that you would probably become a raving maniac."

"Yes, yes, I know all about that," he rejoined, impatiently, "but I am not going to become excited."

"And as for this old man, I have got through with him and will never trouble him again."

"In fact, I don't think I could harm him. I have got the idea into my head that his luck is greater than mine, and that if I attempt to strike him I will surely come to grief."

This remark was addressed more to himself than to Miss Duclou, and a thoughtful expression came over her face. It was her opinion that his mind was giving way.

"And that was the reason why I have taken all this trouble to see you. I wanted you to know that I will not trouble Colonel John Andy Jackson any more."

"But I have another scheme on hand."

"Another scheme?"

"Yes, this new girl whom you lately took into your troupe, this Philippa Edmonds, as she calls herself."

"Yes."

"That girl looks like an angel, but I think she is a devil!"

The man spoke in a tone of profound conviction, and the burlesque queen stared at him in amazement, and then a sudden idea shot into her brain.

"Great heavens! are you the man who tried to kill her in the theater?"

"Yes, and do you know why?"

"Indeed I do not."

"Because she is the living image of my mother!" and the man lowered his tone almost to a whisper as he spoke, and he rolled his eyes fearfully around him.

The actress guessed that he was in one of his crazy fits, and judged that it was best to humor him lest he should become violent.

"Your mother?" she said.

"Yes, you never saw her: she was a good woman, too good for this vile earth and so she died young. But this girl is a perfect picture of her, and the moment I set eyes upon her face I made up my mind I ought to kill her, for some subtle instinct within told me she was a devil, and would do a deal of harm if she was allowed to live."

"But my first blow at her was parried by this accursed detective, and the second failed through accident."

"It is strange, but it sometimes seems to me as if there were devils in this world whom it is impossible to kill."

"If you brood upon this subject you will be back in the Lunatic Asylum in a week, and for good, too!" Miss Duclou exclaimed, energetically.

"Can't you see that this idea of yours about the girl is only a delusion—a delusion due to your malady?"

"Oh, yes, of course I can see it now!" exclaimed the man, readily, and with a cunning smile.

"But there was a time, you know, when I believed that it was the truth."

"You needn't be afraid; I have got over that idea now."

The man was apparently honest in his statement, but there was an ugly doubt in the mind of the burlesque actress as to whether he could be trusted or not.

The peculiar cunning, which is so greatly developed in some of the unfortunate beings whose minds are disordered, might instigate him to deceive her on this point.

"No, no, I am going to make some money out of the girl instead of killing her."

"How so?"

"You know this politician, Judge Goodfellow?"

"Yes."

"Well, he is in pursuit of the girl, you know, and she does not seem to care for him."

"I saw a chance to profit by the affair and so I made a proposition to the judge."

"I am to abduct the girl for him."

"No, no! you must not!" Diana exclaimed.

"Wait until I get through!"

"I have made a bargain with the judge to abduct the girl, and she is to be carried to a lonely country house which the judge has procured up the Hudson."

"There he intends, by either fair means or foul, to make her his wife."

"That is his scheme, and now mine is, by means of the girl I get the judge to this lonely house and there I trap him."

"I will have the cellar all arranged for his reception, and he doesn't stir out of it until he signs a check for about fifty thousand dollars, and with that money I intend to go to some far-off land—Australia, I think—and there lead a new life, which will blot out the remembrance of the past."

The active mind of the woman immediately saw what an advantage it would be to her if the man should succeed in carrying out the scheme.

As it was, as long as he remained in the country, his presence was a perpetual menace to her, for there was no telling when he would become involved in some affair which might result in making public the relations which existed between them.

The scheme was a daring one, but there wasn't any reason why it should not be successful, for she was satisfied from what she knew of the man that he possessed both the cunning and the desperation of a lunatic.

At all events, as far as she could see, the best course for her to pursue was to allow matters to go on without attempting to interfere in any way.

And so she contented herself with a caution.

"Be careful that no harm comes to the girl, for I have taken a strong interest in her, although it is a mystery to me why I should, and I should be sorry if anything happened to her."

"Oh, don't be alarmed about her," he replied.

"I am satisfied as I am about Colonel John Andy Jackson."

"It is not the least use for me to attempt to harm either one of them; their good angels are stronger than I and protect them from me."

"I have taken a good deal of trouble to see you, for this will be our last meeting in this world, I think, for if I carry the scheme to a successful termination I shall get out of the country as soon as possible, but I felt I ought not to go without putting you in possession of the knowledge of what I was about to do."

The man rose to depart.

"One moment!" the burlesque queen exclaimed; "there is a secret which I often begged you to disclose to me. I know that I have led a wretched, stormy life, but still I have a woman's heart and it is not all bad."

"Why will you not believe me when I tell you that I do not know?"

"After the railroad accident the blow upon my head crazed me for a time and I wandered, I know not where. It is the truth, as I am a living man! I have no secret, and though the disappearance was of course my act, I know no more about it than you do. Sometimes a glimmer of light comes into my brain, and it seems as if I was going to remember and then all grows dark again."

They shook hands and parted.

Just one week from that night the abduction was accomplished.

The abductor worked with rare cunning.

He hired a room next to the one occupied by Philippa and Blanche.

Taking advantage of a time when they were absent he entered their room. It was the custom of the girls to drink a glass of wine before retiring to rest after the fatigue of the performance.

It was an easy matter for the spy to drug the wine.

And that night when the two friends finished their wine they felt a strange stupor stealing over them.

But they had not power to resist the drug and soon were helpless.

Then Eberhard stole into the room, wrapped a dark cloak around the person of Philippa and carried her down the stairs, to where a pal was waiting with a coach.

The abductor, with his unconscious victim in his arms, got into the vehicle and away it went.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

AN IMPORTANT FIND.

IN his desire to discover if there was any communication between the desperado who had committed the attack on Colonel John Andy Jackson and the famous burlesque queen, Diana Duclou, Captain Pat McGowen had withdrawn all the spies but one whom he had placed to watch over the girl.

Of course the detective had not the slightest idea that the same man was responsible for the attempt upon the girl's life and the deep-laid plan which so nearly sent the veteran soldier to his last account.

And so, although the spy witnessed the abduction—it was the bootblack, Patsey—yet, owing to the wound he had received, he was not able to pursue the coach and get up behind as he most certainly would have done under other circumstances.

There was a telephone handy though, and by means of this modern destroyer of time and distance Captain McGowen was immediately notified.

The detective had made it a rule since going into this mysterious affair with the idea of solving the riddle of being at his office, where

he could be readily reached by the shadows whom he had enlisted in the enterprise, as much as possible.

All his nights were spent there, for he had a suspicion that during the dark hours around midnight important intelligence might come.

And so it happened that he was in possession of the knowledge of the girl's elopement within ten minutes after the event transpired.

As it happened, the veteran, Colonel John Andy Jackson, was with the detective.

"By gad, sir! this is a bold movement!" the old soldier exclaimed.

"Yes; but I will see if I can't give him a Roland for his Oliver!" Captain Pat exclaimed.

Then calling into use the magic wires he notified Police Headquarters of the outrage, and the Central Office in turn sent warning to all the police stations.

Within thirty minutes after the abduction of the girl the fact was known to every police-officer in charge of a station from the Battery to the Westchester line.

"And now, what is the next move?" the veteran inquired.

"I can't tell yet."

"We must possess our souls with patience and await the arrival of the boy."

"After I learn from him the particulars of the abduction I may be able to decide upon the next move. But I hardly think his information will amount to much more than we already know."

As the detective had surmised, after the boy spysounded the alarm by means of the telephone, he hastened to the detective's office as fast as his legs could carry him.

It was as Captain McGowen had suspected though. The spy could tell but little more than they already knew.

Captain Pat saw that for the present nothing more could be done. They must content themselves with waiting for events to develop.

Leaving the detective and the veteran soldier to their watch, we will transport the reader to the apartments of the burlesque queen.

According to the custom general among the followers of the "sock and buskin" Miss Diana was in the habit of having supper after the performance was over.

Usually Slippery Archy partook of the meal with her, and on this occasion of which we write he was her companion.

The actress seldom took anything but a cup of tea and a bit of toast before commencing her performance, but she made amends for it by eating a hearty meal after it was over.

The Jew speculator was in particularly high spirits to-night, for the performance had passed off with more than usual applause.

This fact he commented upon while they were enjoying the meal.

"It is really astonishing the way the thing goes," he remarked.

"And all the girls are becoming favorites, too," Miss Diana added.

"I can see that there is going to be quite a rivalry between them."

"If you noticed to-night when Blanche came on from the right and Nellie from the left at the same moment the shower of bouquets was astonishing, and it was apparent that Nellie's friends had mustered in force, just for the purpose of making out that she was fully as great a favorite as the other."

"Oh, yes, I saw the little operation. It was clearly a put-up job—it wasn't honest, and Cunningham knew it too, for she seemed fairly to grow six inches taller, and the way she sung was wonderful."

"Bah! Nellie hadn't a chance with her after she opened her mouth!" the burlesque queen declared.

"Oh, yes, there isn't any mistake about that. Blanche is a head and shoulders above the other, and her favoritism is all genuine, while a great deal of enthusiasm displayed for the other comes from a couple of dozen friends—young men-about-town, who think they are bloods—whose acquaintance she has made."

"And the novice, too, Philippa, is getting to be quite a favorite."

"Did you notice what an elegant reception she got to-night?"

"Oh, yes, and I was rather astonished at the warmth of it, for it was only second to your own, until Colonel Richmond let me into the secret of the thing."

"The secret!" exclaimed Diana in astonishment.

"Yes; the reason why she gets such a reception. I said to the colonel to-night—we were together when she came on—

"It is astonishing that she should get so warm a welcome."

"And he explained it by saying:

"Why, my dear fellow, nine-tenths of the audience give her a reception because they think it is Miss Duclouis in another dress when she appears."

"Is that possible?" asked the burlesque queen, amazed by the intelligence.

"Oh, yes, not a doubt of it, for the statement was immediately confirmed by the remarks of the gentlemen who were in our neighborhood. They all took the girl to be you, and when I

came to take a careful look, I was not surprised at the mistake, for there is really a great likeness between you."

"Of course, knowing you so well, and never having my attention called to it before, the resemblance never struck me."

"Well, I suppose that we do look like each other when we are dressed for the stage," the actress remarked, slowly.

"But her hair is an entirely different color from mine."

"Yes, that is true, but notwithstanding you two look enough like to be sisters."

"I understand now what two of the girls meant whom I happened to overhear conversing to-night in the wing."

"Philippa was on the stage at the time, and I had an idea at first that the girls were speaking about her, but as the thought that there was any resemblance between us had not occurred to me, I did not exactly understand what the chatterboxes were driving at."

"One said to the other:

"No wonder she is favored, can't you see at a glance why it is?"

"And then the other replied:

"Certainly, and the idea of making such a mystery about it—making out that she was a stranger; why couldn't she have come out with the truth?"

"Just then the two became aware that I was in their neighborhood and the conversation suddenly came to an end, while the girls looked confused, just as if they fancied I had overheard their conversation and would be angry at it."

"Naturally, I guessed that they were referring to me and to Edmonds, but why they should speak as they did was a mystery to me, and I had half a mind to ask them outright, but then I thought the matter wasn't worth noticing and so I didn't do it."

"The explanation is simple enough," Slippery Archy observed.

"The girls noticed the great resemblance which existed between you and this Philippa, and with the natural suspicion of their sex they at once jumped to the conclusion that she was a relation of yours and that you, for some reason, desired to keep the matter a secret."

"I see, and that was sufficient, of course, to set their idle, malicious tongues in motion."

"The donkeys!" and the lip of the burlesque queen arched in contempt.

"What a ridiculous idea to suppose I would descend to so paltry a farce!"

"If the girl was a relative why should I wish to disguise the fact and palm her on people as a stranger. If she was my sister I would not be ashamed to own her."

"Your sister, no; but if she was your daughter—as these amiable young ladies undoubtedly suspect—it would be rather awkward."

"With a big minx of a daughter twenty years old, you couldn't very well pretend that you were a blooming virgin of twenty-five, or thereabouts."

A strange expression came over the face of the burlesque queen and a peculiar light shone in her eyes.

"My daughter," she said, slowly.

"Yes, that is the caper with them of course!" Slippery Archy replied, flippantly.

"That is what they will take their oaths to, and honestly I don't wonder at it, for the girl looks enough like you to be your child. I might have a suspicion that way myself, only I know you are hardly aged enough to have so old a child, unless she was born when you were about fifteen."

"Oh, yes, the idea is absurd, of course!" the burlesque queen said, with white lips.

"Well, I'll be off to bed."

The speculator rose, and as he took up his light overcoat, a letter dropped from it to the floor.

The actress called his attention to it.

Slippery Archy stooped and picked it up.

"Yes, it isn't mine; it belongs to Judge Goodfellow. I found it in the lobby of the box where we had been sitting."

"It doesn't amount to anything, about some house in the country."

A sudden gleam of fire shot rapidly from the eyes of the burlesque queen, but Archy, busy with his coat, did not notice it.

"Suppose you give me the letter and let me return it to the judge. I will tell him where it was found and he will suppose I picked it up."

"I want to keep on the right side of him and he will undoubtedly be flattered by the attention."

"Certainly, that is a good idea."

And then the speculator took his departure, little dreaming how important the letter seemed to the burlesque queen.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

IN THE OLD HOUSE.

THE actress fancied that she recognized the handwriting on the envelope, and when the gentleman spoke about the letter being in reference to some house, she determined to get it into her possession, for she was sure that Eberhard had written the letter, and she surmised that the Louse mentioned was the one to which

the girl was to be conveyed after her abduction.

The burlesque queen was thoroughly selfish, and with the hope that the affair would remove Eberhard from her path she had resolved not to interfere.

But now a new light had flashed upon her—the vail which covered the past had been rudely torn aside, and her stern, resolute heart was rent with anguish.

Eagerly she perused the letter.

It was brief and to the point, merely saying that the house had been secured and giving directions how to reach it.

"Evidently a lonely place," muttered the actress, as with feverish haste she devoured the contents of the letter.

The epistle closed with the announcement:

"The business will be closed to-night, and a visit from you as soon as possible will be in order."

There was no signature to the letter, just as if some careless man, in haste, had omitted to sign it.

The sentence was apparently an innocent one, referring to the house, but Diana Duclouis knew in a moment what it meant.

The "business" was the abduction of the girl. "To-night!" and the brain of the woman seemed to be on fire as she uttered the words.

"Great heavens! can it mean this night?" She glanced at the date of the letter.

It had been written that day.

"Oh, merciful powers! this is a judgment on me indeed!" she cried, pacing up and down the room like a caged tigress. "By this time, possibly, the girl is in the power of her foes, and I, like a blind idiot, have stood tamely by and allowed the foul outrage to be consummated."

"Oh, how terribly blind I have been!" and she moaned and wrung her hands in her despair.

"That mad wretch intends to kill her! He has lied to me! No wonder that in his insanity he imagines the girl looks like his mother."

"Oh, I can understand it all now, but how dreadfully blind I have been not to suspect the truth before now! No wonder I was attracted to the girl and felt a disposition to aid her."

"But is it too late to rush to her rescue?"

"No, it is not! Thanks to the fortunate accident which placed this letter in my hands, I know the secret of the retreat to which she has been carried. But I must have assistance—I cannot do the work alone."

"Archy?"

And then she shook her head in a decided manner.

"Oh, no, he would never do to depend upon in an emergency of this kind."

"I must have a brave and resolute man to cope with this lunatic, for he will be apt to be desperate when he finds I have come to tear his prey from him."

"Oh, this agony that now sears my heart!"

"Where can I find the man resolute enough to cope with this lunatic?"

And then as she put the question, all of a sudden into her mind flashed the remembrance of the detective officer who had so nearly trapped him.

"Aha! the very man!" she cried in wild exultation.

"The very man, and one who undoubtedly will jump at a chance to cage his prey."

"But will I be able to find him at this late hour?"

"I must find him, if I have to search New York to its center!"

It did not take the burlesque queen long to equip herself for the street, and to such a woman, used to being abroad at late hours, darkness had no terrors.

She proceeded at once to Broadway.

A dark cloak covered her person, and a plain bonnet with a heavy vail protected her head, so that she was neither apt to be recognized nor to attract attention.

In New York it is always possible to hire a carriage on a thoroughfare like Broadway at any hour of the day or night.

Luckily for the purpose of the actress, the very first hackman to whom she spoke was well acquainted both with the Greencoat Detective and the location of his office.

And, in regard to the probability of finding him there at such an hour, expressed the belief that some one would be at the office, or failing that by driving to the Metropolitan Police Headquarters his residence would be learned.

But the fortunate star of the actress was in the ascendant this night, for as the reader knows the detective was at his office.

For a moment the burlesque queen was embarrassed when she discovered that the veteran soldier, Colonel John Andy Jackson, was with Captain Pat McGowen.

But in her mind rose the thought:

"It is Heaven's will that he should be present at the solution of this dark mystery, and I will not attempt to fight against it."

So, resolutely, regardless of the presence of the Southerner, she told her story.

Even the experienced detective was amazed, for he had no expectation of getting a clew to the girl's whereabouts in any such easy manner.

Everything seemed to be working in the favor of the captive girl on this occasion, for the detective was well acquainted with the locality where the old house was situated, and, in fact, felt pretty certain that he knew the mansion itself.

"We will set out at once," he exclaimed. "Is there any objection to my presence—I assure you I will not be in the way? I am armed, too, and in the event of this madman offering resistance, which I think he will be sure to do, I will not hesitate to use my pistol."

The actress spoke like one inspired, hateful fires flashed from her eyes and her face was white with excitement.

And now for the first time the detective noticed the strange resemblance which existed between the burlesque queen and Philippa, and the eagerness that the woman displayed in the matter gave rise to a strange suspicion in his mind.

So he asked: "Would you have any objection to Colonel Jackson accompanying us?"

"No; I think it is better that he should go," was the odd reply of the actress.

Ten minutes later the three were on their way.

And now leaving the rescuers safely embarked on their errand of mercy, we will return to Philippa and her abductor.

The scheme had been so cunningly planned and so carefully carried out that it succeeded to perfection.

The house was reached and the girl, still insensible, for the dose administered had been a heavy one, was carried into the house and placed in an apartment on the first floor which had been expressly prepared for her reception.

Then Eberhard, leaving his confederate to watch the girl, took up a position at the front gate in expectation that the judge would soon come.

He was right in his conjecture for within half an hour the politician made his appearance.

Eberhard conducted him to the house.

The plotter showed him that the girl was safely in the toils as he had agreed, then conducted him to the adjoining apartment, which was a sitting-room right off the main hall, and suggested that a check for the money promised would be acceptable.

"No check," said the judge, "to get me into trouble hereafter. You shall have the cash."

Hardly had the words left his lips when the front door was beaten in with a blow from a sledge-hammer in the hands of Captain Pat—which he had provided for that express purpose—and the detective, revolver in hand, rushed into the apartment followed by the burlesque queen, while Colonel Jackson brought up the rear.

Both Eberhard and the judge drew their revolvers.

"Don't attempt to use your weapons or I will riddle both of you!" Captain McGowen cried.

The judge realized that to resist were folly and put up his weapon.

But Eberhard was made of sterner stuff.

"Dog, you shall die!" he cried, cocking his pistol.

The detective realized that it was either his life or the assassin's—for in the person of Eberhard he recognized Philippa's assailant—and he did not hesitate to fire.

But he tried to wound and not to kill.

Fate willed otherwise, for the assassin, attempting to dodge the bullet, received it full in the chest.

He staggered backward, tottered, fell, and died almost immediately.

"I didn't mean to kill him, but I felt I must disable him," the detective remarked. "Where is the lady?" he continued, addressing the judge sternly.

Goodfellow saw by this that the game was up and so tried to make the best of the situation.

"In yonder room," he answered. "She has not suffered any harm. I admit that I have acted foolishly in this matter, but I am willing to do all I can to make reparation and stand ready to make Miss Edmonds my wife at a moment's notice."

"As her mother I must decline the alliance!" exclaimed the burlesque actress.

And then Diana told her story.

She admitted she was the Catherine Raymond who had wedded Colonel Jackson, but said she was never really his wife, for the dead man, Eberhard, then passing as her brother, was really her husband, and the child of whom the colonel was in search, believing it to be his, was Eberhard's daughter.

"When we fled," she said in conclusion, "we came North. On the way there was an accident on the railroad. I was stunned by the shock, and my husband, half crazed by a blow on the head, wandered away with the child.

"It was a year before we saw each other, and he could not tell what had become of my daughter, but, to the best of his belief, in his crazy spell he had given the child away to some people who wanted to adopt it as their own.

"I will not attempt to disguise my conduct.

I was a heartless mother and made no search for the child, but now, with the lapse of years, repentance has come, and I am willing to do all in my power to promote the happiness of my daughter, whom I believe to be Philippa. I shall soon know the truth, for my child has birthmarks by means of which she can be surely identified."

It was true; Philippa was the long-lost child. The colonel was generous and offered to forgive the past and take the actress to his heart again; and she, touched by his generosity, regretted that it could not be, for she admitted she was married to the Jew speculator who had made her fortune.

Then a discussion arose as to Philippa, but Captain Pat McGowen settled that by putting in his claim, and the blushing girl confessed that he had had possession of her heart from the night when he had so nobly rescued her from the assassin's grasp.

Our story is told.

The burlesque queen yet wins the applause of the multitude on the boards, and the noble-hearted Blanche is still her right-hand "man," but the garish footlights no longer flame upon the beautiful Philippa.

In private, though, she reigns, a very queen, over the home of the Greencoat Detective, bold Captain Pat McGowen.

THE END.

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